My Book of
STORIES from THE POETS

UNIVERSITY OF TORONTO

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of
Nineteenth Century
English Literature

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MY BOOK OF
STORIES FROM THE POETS

Told in Prose by
CHRISTINE CHAUNDLER

With Twelve Illustrations in Colour by
A. C. MICHAEL

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INTRODUCTION

WHEN we consider the fact that prose is an easier and far more natural form of expression than poetry and one which, at the present time, is very much more common, it is rather surprising to find that long before any story-books were written very many of the old legends and fairy tales were set down in the form of verse. Nowadays stories are told in ordinary, simple language such as people use in everyday conversation, and it very often happens that one story is considered better than another just because it is expressed in words that are easier to understand; but in the olden days, when a great many of the poems whose stories are told in this book were written, this was not the case.

The first story to be published in ordinary language was "Robinson Crusoe," which I expect you have read. It was written by Daniel Defoe in the year 1715. But it was not until twenty-five years after that another was written ("Pamela," by Samuel Richardson) that marked the beginning of story-writing in the form which now prevails, and, because of the difficulties of printing, it was not until fairly recent times that the writing of stories became at all common.

Long before this time, however, poetry enjoyed a great deal of popularity, and very many tales, which in modern times would have been written in prose, were, instead, set down in verse. There are several reasons for this, and they are not really hard to understand.

The first is that, as I have already said, printing was a very great difficulty, and, in fact, before Caxton set up his press at Westminster in 1474, there was no such thing. The result of this was that everything had to be copied out by hand by the monks, and although a certain amount of this was done, and done very beautifully with wonderful drawings down the sides of the sheets and beautiful colour effects that were known as illuminations, yet naturally nothing of very great length could be undertaken, and, moreover, they could not afford to do anything that was not especially good. So, because nobody was very much impressed by ordinary simple language in those days, unless it happened to be in Latin, the monks only bothered to copy out poetry.

There is another reason. Very many of the old poems were originally songs, sung by travelling musicians who went by the name of "Troubadours." There are a great many stories that might be told of these old minstrels, and I wish I had time to tell you some of them, for they are well worth hearing. The troubadours make some of the most romantic figures in history, and I have often thought that if I had the chance of being carried back to some earlier age, I should choose to visit the castle of some old Norman baron at the time when he and his family and vassals were seated round the huge log fire, listening to a stirring song of brave knights and beautiful princesses sung by a minstrel in queer fantastic garb, who sat accompanying himself on a harp.

Many of the songs sung by the troubadours have been handed down for several hundreds of years, and though they have probably changed a good deal in the course of time, yet the substance of them is the same, and several of the tales in this book are founded upon them.

There are various other reasons why so much poetry was written in the olden days, but I have not time to dwell on those now. It is enough to say that the habit of poetry became so popular that nobody thought of writing a story save as a poem or possibly a play. And what wonderful poems they sometimes were! For even their poetry in those times was quite different from ours. They used long words that only the people who write dictionaries have ever heard of, and they wrote sentences that were so tangled up that even the very cleverest folk found them hard to understand.

In more modern times, since story writing has become common, this art of telling tales in poetry has almost died away, but it flourished until the beginning of the last century, and it is only in quite recent years that it has nearly disappeared. As I have said, many of these poems are so long and so difficult to understand that young people do not care to read them, but all the same the stories they tell are very beautiful and interesting, and they form the themes of some of the finest poetry ever written in English. And this is why these stories have been written. Not that they may take the place of the poems—you must not think that for one moment!—but that, when you have read this book, you may go straight to the poems themselves and read the stories in all their original beauty.

There are other things, too, about this book which may interest you, and not the least of these are the lives of the poets whose stories are told. There are so many of them that we are only able to touch on one or two. Perhaps, because he was the youngest and because in some ways he was the most brilliant, it might be interesting to tell you one or two things in connection with Keats.

I have said that he was the youngest because he was only twenty-six when he died in Rome in the year 1821, so that all his great works were written at a comparatively early age.

John Keats started life as an apprentice to a surgeon at Enfield, and when twenty-two published his first volume of poems, which was very unfavourably criticised in the literary magazines of the day. There are some people who say that these adverse criticisms were the cause of Keats' early death, but really this is untrue, for he was far too great a man to be disturbed by things of that sort, and actually he died of consumption.

The most beautiful poem Keats ever wrote was called "Endymion," which some day, no doubt, you will read; and quite one of the finest is "La Belle Dame Sans Merci," the story of which you will find in this book.

Another poet whose life contains many points of interest is Alfred Tennyson. Tennyson had two brothers, both of whom were poets like himself, and although some of their work is very good, yet he was by far the greatest of the three. His first book, to which his brother Charles also contributed, was called "Poems by Two Brothers," and although it is a work that is very little known now, yet there is much in it that shows promise of the wonderful poetry that was to come.

Some day you must read the poems, "Enoch Arden" and "The Princess," the stories of both of which are given here, for it will afford you an interesting example of contrast in styles.

Tennyson was only forty-one when he became Poet Laureate, which, as I expect you know, means the first poet in the land, and he held this position until his death, which occurred a few years after he accepted a peerage.

Now, although as a rule poetry is serious, yet it has its lighter moments, and some of the best examples of light poetry are to be found in the " Ingoldsby Legends," by R. H. Barham, who wrote under the name of Thomas Ingoldsby. At the age of twelve this clever poet had his right arm crippled in a coach accident, and after this, seeing that he could no longer play games like other boys, he devoted himself to his studies, and later on gave to the world a poem that will always be remembered for its humour : " The Jackdaw of Rheims."

Although nearly all poets whose works are mentioned in this book are English, yet Longfellow, whose " Evangeline " and " The Courtship of Miles Standish " appear here, is an American. He was directly descended from members of that little band of pilgrims which sailed to America in the *Mayflower* so many years ago and formed the origin of the present United States of America.

When, at the age of fourteen, Longfellow entered Bowdoin College, Brunswick, he showed great signs of intellectual power, and this seemed to increase throughout his days as a student. At the age of eighteen he was appointed professor of modern languages in his college, a truly remarkable feat in one so young.

Longfellow was always very fond of children, and he has written a lot of poetry about them, including a little piece called "The Children's Hour," which was written about his own two daughters, and you would do well to read it if you have not already done so.

Although Longfellow was successful as a poet, yet he had an unhappy life, for his first wife died after they had been married only four years, and his second wife did not live long; this sad fact can be very often noticed in his work.

Almost at the end of this book you will find a poem called "The Ancient Mariner," by Samuel Taylor Coleridge. This was one in a book which he wrote, together with Wordsworth, called "The Lyrical Ballads," and, as you will learn later, it had a very great effect upon the literature of the day.

Coleridge and Wordsworth and Southey formed what are now known as the Lake poets, because they lived close together near the lakes of Cumberland. Although Wordsworth is probably the best known of the three, and Southey, because of the book he wrote called "The Life of Nelson," comes next, yet there are many people who prefer Coleridge as a poet.

"The Ancient Mariner" is a poem that will never be forgotten, not so much for the story itself as for the style in which it is written; and this peculiar fascination is to be seen in many other of Coleridge's works.

One of the most popular short poems in English is the one by Sir Walter Scott about young Lochinvar, the story of which is given here. Scott is a member of that very rare class of writer who has attained fame both as a poet and as a novelist, and who is equally great in each respect.

He started his literary career as a poet, and produced many famous works, including "The Lay of the Last Minstrel," "Marmion," "The Lady of the Lake," and a number of others, and for a time he was the greatest narrative poet of his day. Then another came to the fore whose fame threatened to eclipse that of Scott. This was Lord Byron, the writer of "Childe Harold," "Don Juan," "Manfred," and, amongst many others, the poem whose story is given in this volume, "The Prisoner of Chillon."

Byron's work became so popular that Scott realised that in this particular sphere he was unable to hold his own, so, nothing daunted, he turned his attention to another field. Ten years previously it happened that he had started a historical romance which he had put away only half finished; now, hunting about in an old lumber room, he came across the old manuscript, and, completing it, had it published anonymously in the year 1814. This was "Waverley," and was the first of a long series known as the "Waverley Novels," which is now famous all over the world. Some day, if you have not already done so, you should read "Ivanhoe," and "Rob Roy," and "The Talisman." You will find that although they may look "stodgy," they are really just as exciting and far more interesting than many of the books written nowadays.

Scott was in many ways as brave as the characters he loved to picture, for he spent the last ten years of his life in paying off the immense debt incurred by his publishers, who went bankrupt, and but for his unceasing toil to do this he would no doubt have lived much longer.

Before I come to the end of this rather long introduction there is just one other point I would like to make clear. This is about the "Percy Reliques." You will see, if you look in the "Contents," that a number of the poems of which the stories are given come from this source.

The "Percy Reliques" are a collection of old Border songs, poems and legends, gathered together in 1765 by an old bishop; they contain many of the finest examples of old English poetry.

N. G. D.

MY BOOK OF
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Goblin Market

THE goblins lived in the dark wood beyond the little rush-fringed brook where the village girls, at the close of day, came to fill their pitchers. All day long the little men hid themselves in the depths of the wood, but as soon as the sun set they came trooping down the glen through which the brook ran, carrying in their hands baskets of wonderful fruit, and calling out:

"Come buy our orchard fruits,
Come buy, come buy."

Nobody had ever seen such wonderful fruits as the goblins brought to their nightly market—apples, quinces, lemons, oranges, beautiful juicy cherries, melons, raspberries, peaches, mulberries, apricots, strawberries, great bunches of black grapes—every kind of fruit that ever ripened, summer or winter, the goblins brought with them each night to the glen. All the night through they danced and sang and feasted, but when the morning came they gathered up what remained of their fruit and trooped off into the wood to wait till evening came again.

But though the goblin fruit was so beautiful to look at, the village people did not dare to buy it. The girls of the village who came to draw water from the brook shuddered when they heard the cry of the little men; and hastily filling their pitchers they would hurry back to their homes. For the goblin fruit was poisonous and brought terrible grief and harm to the unwary person who ate of it. One moonlight night one of the village girls had met the little men and had been tempted to eat of the fruits they had pressed upon her. Never had she tasted such delicious fruit, and she had eaten greedily of it, but she had paid dearly for her pleasure. Once having partaken of the goblins' magic fruit, all other fruit seemed to her to be sour and bitter. She longed and longed to taste the fruit again, but though she had searched for the little goblin men by day and night, she had never seen nor heard them any more. Others had heard their cry, and if they had stayed too late at the brook had seen the quaint little figures as usual, hurrying through the trees to the glen to hold their nightly revels. But to her who had tasted of their fruit they had become invisible for ever. She might never see nor hear them, nor taste their food again. She grew thin and ill and miserable, consumed all the time by a terrible thirst and longing for the magic fruit, until, when the first snow fell, she died.

In a little house on the edge of the moor, close to the wood and the village, two sisters lived alone. Many of the village girls were pretty, but none were so pretty as these two. None had such curly golden hair, such dancing eyes, such rosy cheeks and dimpled mouths as Laura and Lizzie. The two loved each other dearly and were scarcely ever separated. Early in the morning they rose up from their beds, fresh and sweet as the heather that grew around their cottage door. They fetched the honey from the hives which they kept in the garden, milked their cow and fed the poultry, set the house to rights, churned the butter, whipped up the cream, and kneaded dainty white cakes of sweetest wheaten bread. All day long they were happy and busy, and when the evening came they would take their pitchers down to the brook for water, as the other girls did.

One evening they were late in setting out for the brook, and before they had filled their pitchers they heard the song of the little goblin men as they came hurrying through the wood:

"Come buy our orchard fruits,
Come buy, come buy."

"Hurry, Laura," cried Lizzie as she heard it. "We must not listen to the song of the goblins. Fill your pitcher quickly and let us hasten home."

But Laura did not seem to hear what her sister was saying; she was gazing at the goblins as they trooped through the wood. It was the first time she had ever been so close to them, and she thought that she had never seen such curious little creatures.

"Look, look, Lizzie!" she cried. "Did you ever see such funny little men? And, oh, look at the beautiful fruits they are carrying! What a wonderful orchard it must be where such fine fruits can ripen all together."

"Laura, Laura! You must not look!" cried Lizzie in fear and distress. "Shut your eyes, quick, and come home." And, putting her fingers in her ears so that she should not hear the tempting cry, Lizzie scrambled up the bank and ran back to the little cottage beside the moor, too frightened even to look round to see if her sister was following her.

But Laura stayed still by the brook, gazing in wonder at the little men; and when the goblins saw her they came crowding round, holding up their baskets and begging her to buy.

"See our rosy-cheeked apples! Look at our fine plums! Try our grapes and cherries! Taste our beautiful juicy melons!" they clamoured, and Laura's mouth began to water as she looked at the wonderful fruits.

"Good Folk," she said, "I have no money. I have neither copper nor silver in my purse, and as for gold—all the gold that I possess is on the furze bushes that grow amongst the heather. Alas! I cannot buy your fruit!"

But the goblins only pressed closer around her.

"You have much gold upon your head," they cried. "Buy from us with a golden curl?" And one of them held up a pair of scissors towards her.

Laura could resist the temptation no longer. She seized the scissors, clipped off one long curl, and stretched out her hands for the fruit the goblins showered upon her. Apples and oranges, melons and dewberries, strawberries, apricots, cherries and peaches—eagerly she took them, eagerly she ate them, until she could eat no more. Then she flung away the empty rinds, gathered up one cherry stone and turned homewards, scarcely knowing whether it was night or day, so dazed and intoxicated was she by the wonderful feast.

Lizzie met her at the gate, full of anxious questioning.

"Dear, where have you been? You should not stay so late!" she said reproachfully. "Remember poor Jeanie, and how she met the goblin men in the moonlight, and afterwards pined and pined away until she died. You must never, never stay so late again."

"Nay, sister, hush!" cried Laura gaily. "I have eaten and eaten, and never in my life have I tasted such marvellous fruit! To-morrow night I will go again and will bring some back to you—delicious plums and cherries, melons and peaches and grapes, such as you never even dreamt of! My mouth waters still at the thought of them. Let us go to bed at once so that the morning may come the more quickly. I do not know how I shall endure to wait until to-morrow night to taste those fruits again."

The two sisters went into the cottage, and when they had had their supper, they lay down side by side in their little white bed, their golden heads close together on the pillow. Laura fell asleep happy and smiling, but Lizzie lay awake for a long while, sad at heart and full of anxious forebodings, for she could not help remembering Jeanie and her terrible fate. What, oh what, if the same fate should overtake her sister?

The next morning the two rose up and went about their household duties, Lizzie, now recovered from her fears, happy and singing over her work as usual, Laura, as though in a dream, longing all the time for the night to come. And when at last the sun set and they started out for the brook, Laura's excitement rose to fever-heat. She hurried on ahead of her sister, laughing and dancing for joy that the time of the goblins' market had come again.

They filled their pitchers with fresh water, and Lizzie gathered an armful of the yellow flags that grew beside the stream. Then she picked up her pitcher and turned to her sister.

"Come, Laura," she said, "the daylight is dying fast. Birds and beasts are gone to rest—it is time that we, too, were away."

But Laura would not leave the glen yet. She was listening for the cry of the goblins; and though the dew was falling and the wind was growing chilly, she still stood beside the rushes that fringed the little stream.

Lizzie, who was growing more and more frightened at the lateness of the hour, urged her again and again to come home.

"Oh, Laura, come!" she cried. "I hear the fruit call, but I dare not look. The stars are beginning to shine, the daylight is almost gone. Hark! The goblins are drawing nearer and nearer—oh, please, dear Laura, come away!"

Laura's heart stood still with terror when she found that her sister could hear the goblins' cry. She strained her ears to hear and shaded her eyes to see, but never a glimpse could she catch of the quaint little hobbling figures, nor hear the faintest echo of their nightly cry:

"Come buy our orchard fruits,
Come buy, come buy."

She said not a word, but, picking up her pitcher, she followed her sister homewards, all thought and feeling gone except for a terrible longing and thirst for the fruit she would never see or taste again. She sat down to supper in silent misery, but she could not eat. She crept into bed, but she could not sleep. She rose up as usual in the morning, but she could not work. Day by day she grew frailer and weaker. Her hair turned grey, her cheeks grew white and thin, her eyes dull and sunken, until it seemed as though she were an old, old woman, instead of the fair young girl she had been only a short time ago.

She planted the cherry stone which she had brought from the goblins' feast in the sunniest corner of the garden, and watered it and watched it in the faint hope that it might grow into a tree and one day bear fruit. But it never did. And as even this last hope faded, Laura grew more and more miserable and wretched. All her old happy life was over. She no more tended the house, or kneaded the bread, or brought water from the brook. All day long she sat in the chimney corner, brooding and listless, eating nothing, longing for the fruit she might not taste.

Lizzie, in grief and despair, watched her sister fading away before her eyes, yet she knew not what to do. Was there no cure for the sickness caused by eating the poisonous fruit, she asked herself in desperation? She had heard people say that if the sick person could only taste of the fruit a second time there was just a chance that it would break the dreadful spell. But how was Laura to taste the fruit a second time since she could neither see nor hear the goblins any more? Even if she—Lizzie—were to go to the glen for her, it would be useless. The goblins would never part with their fruit save to those who would sit and eat it with them; and if so much as one drop of the magic juice should pass her lips she would fall under the dreadful spell herself, without having done any good to her sister. No, she dare not go to bargain with the little evil men. It was too terrible a risk to run for such a very doubtful good.

But Laura grew daily weaker and frailer until she appeared to be almost at death's door; and at last it seemed to Lizzie that if she did not wish to lose her sister altogether, she must at least try to see what she could do, in spite of the dreadful risk she would run. Bravely she put all thought of her own danger out of her mind, and determined to think only of her sister. Then, putting a silver penny into her purse and kissing Laura tenderly, she set out one evening as the dusk was creeping up over the moor, halted at the brook, and for the first time in her life began to look and listen for the goblins.

The little men were already at their market, and, seeing Lizzie watching them, they set up their cry:

"Come buy our orchard fruits,
Come buy, come buy."

and then, as this time Lizzie did not run away, they came swarming around her, shouting and jostling and elbowing one another, begging her to buy their fruit.

Lizzie threw them her silver penny and held out her apron.

"Good Folk," she said, "give me as much as my money will buy."

"You may have as much as you will," said the goblins, "but we cannot put the fruit into your apron. You must eat it with us here. Fruits such as these would spoil if you carried them away. Sit down and feast with us, and then you need not buy them—you shall be our honoured guest."

"That I cannot do," said Lizzie. "One waits for me at home, sad and sick and lonely. It is for her that I would buy. Give me of your fruit and let me go."

"No, no, no!" cried the goblins. "You may not carry it away." And they began to scowl and shake their fists at Lizzie until she trembled with fear. Yet still she would not yield to their persuasions.

"Give me of your fruit," she said again, "and let me go. Or else give me back my silver penny." And she came a step nearer as though to take it from them.

Then the goblins gave a scream of anger and flung themselves furiously upon her. They pulled her hair and tore her gown, stamped upon her feet and beat her with their hands. Scratching, screaming and dancing with rage, they clustered round her, and while some held her hands fast, others pressed their fruit against her lips, trying to force her to eat of it. Lizzie struggled bravely to resist them; and though the goblins scratched and pinched her, cuffed her and kicked her, yet she never uttered a sound. She stood in the midst of the wicked little creatures with her lips tightly closed, not daring to open them for one moment, lest the little men should succeed in cramming some of their fruit into her mouth. The juice trickled down her face and neck; and in spite of the pain she was enduring, her heart beat fast with joy as she felt it, for she began to see now how her sister might once again taste of the goblins' magic fruit.

At last, worn out by her brave resistance, the goblins flung back the silver penny into Lizzie's face. Then, snatching up their baskets, they fled into the wood, still shouting angrily as they went. Lizzie did not stay to see the last of them. As soon as they set her free she sprang up the bank, tore across the heather to the cottage, threw open the door, and, breathless with excitement, flung herself on her knees beside her sister.

"Laura, Laura, kiss me!" she cried. "Kiss me quickly, quickly! Never mind my bruises—kiss me and taste the goblins' fruit once more! For your sake I have been to the goblin market, and braved the wicked little goblin men."

Laura started up and flung her arms around her sister.

"Oh, Lizzie, you *haven't?*" she cried in anguish. "Have you too eaten of the dreadful fruit? Must your life, too, be wasted?" And overcome with grief and remorse she pressed Lizzie to her, and kissed her again and again, while for the first time since she had eaten of the forbidden fruit, tears of penitent sorrow fell from her eyes. Then, as the magic juices touched her lips, she sprang to her feet with a scream, for they burnt and stung her, and changed the terrible thirst and longing into bitter loathing and hate. All at once she realised how foolish and wrong she had been to taste the goblins' fruit, and with cries and tears she paced up and down the room, until at last she fell unconscious on the floor.

Lizzie carried her to her bed, and all night long she watched beside her as she lay white and still upon her pillow. Was it life or death? Had her toil and trouble been in vain? Would her sister die after all? She fanned Laura's face and bathed her forehead, smoothed back the long soft hair, and waited anxiously for the morning. And when the first birds chirped about the eaves, and the dawning light crept through the cottage window, Laura awoke —no longer sick and ill and weak and grey, but the gay, happy, laughing Laura of old, with rosy cheeks and shining eyes, and sunny golden hair.

By her bravery and devotion Lizzie had won her sister back to life—the goblins' wicked spell was broken!

A Legend of Bregenz

LAKE CONSTANCE lies girt round with rugged mountains, like a mirror in which are reflected the white clouds which pass silently over the mountain-tops, the blue of the sky at noonday, and the stars which bend down over the water when darkness descends upon the lake. Gazing down into the deep, cool waters, you might almost think that a piece of heaven itself lies on our earth below.

High above the lake, on the Tyrol side of the water, stands the quaint old town of Bregenz, as it has stood for a thousand years or more. The towers and battlements of the city cast their shadow upon the lake, and many are the strange sights they have seen, many the stories the silent stones could tell if they had but speech. There is one legend especially which is known to all who live in Bregenz—known maybe to the silent lake and the valley and the mountains themselves—the story of how the town of Bregenz was saved from her enemies three hundred years ago.

Amongst the pleasant valleys of Switzerland, far from her home and kindred, a Tyrol maid lived and worked. She had left her home in Bregenz long years ago to serve strange masters for her daily bread. It was so long now since she had left that she had almost forgotten she had ever lived in another country. Her master's family was very kind to her. The Swiss people seemed friends; she had learnt to speak their language perfectly. When she led the cattle out to pasture every morning she no longer looked and wondered in which direction Bregenz lay, as she had been used to look and wonder when she first came to the new land. She no longer spoke of her town; her Tyrol home was faded in the mist of years; and though she sometimes heard rumours of war and strife she paid little heed to them. Each day she rose up calm and contented, ready for a fresh day of toil. Only when her master's children gathered round her knee at close of day would she sometimes sing them songs of her own land; save for then, and when she knelt to say her prayers morning and evening, the speech of her childhood never passed her lips.

So she dwelt, the peaceful valley growing daily more and more homelike to her. But one year, as it grew towards harvest time, a great unrest seemed to come amongst the people with whom she lived. The golden corn was ripe, yet the farmers did not seem to heed. They paced up and down all day, deep in anxious talk. The men appeared stern and altered, the women fearful and anxious. Work was neglected. Spinning-wheels stood idle, flax was unspun, the very children seemed affected by the spirit of unrest, and were almost afraid to go alone to school or to their play.

One day matters appeared to come to a climax. Out in the meadows the men of the village walked up and down in eager conclave with strangers, discussing some secret plan, every now and then pausing to watch a strange, uncertain gleam that might have been lances hidden amongst the trees below. And at evening the secret was known. The villagers met together to feast and rejoice, as though they had received some great news, and when all were assembled the elder of the village rose up, his glass in his hand.

"Drink with me!" he cried. "Drink to the downfall of an accursed land! All is prepared. The surprise attack will be launched to-night. Ere one more day has passed Bregenz—our foemen's stronghold—Bregenz shall be our own!"

A ringing cheer from the men greeted this announcement. The women shrank in terror at hearing their worst fears realised. Yet even though their hearts were torn with grief at the coming parting from their sons and husbands and brothers, their bosoms were filled with pride in their men, with joy at their foes' approaching downfall. But one woman was there who could feel neither joy nor pride at the elder's announcement. One poor Tyrol maiden felt death within her heart.

Once more before her eyes rose the picture of Bregenz. Once more she could see the towers and battlements of the city. All at once she realised that the friends beside her were her country's foes. The days of her bygone childhood, the faces of her kinsfolk, the once familiar outline of the mountains around Lake Constance came back to her memory: Bregenz reclaimed her as her own. Around her the cheers rang out again and again, but nothing did she hear or heed. Gone were the green Swiss valleys, the pastures where she fed the cattle day by day. Before her eyes was but one vision, in her heart was but one cry, which said:

"Go forth, save Bregenz. And then, if need be, die!"

Unperceived, she left the feast room, and sped on noiseless feet to the shed where stood the horses and the cattle which she tended. She loosed the strong white charger which she had taught to feed from her hand, and led him out of the stable. Steadily and methodically she saddled and bridled him, then mounted and turned his head towards her native land.

Out into the darkness she urged her steed, and faster and still more fast the smooth grass flew beneath the horse's feet. The chestnut wood outside the village was passed, but still she urged the horse on to greater efforts. There was not a moment to lose. If Bregenz was to be saved she must bring her people news of the surprise planned by their enemies as speedily as possible. Even now it might be too late—and at the thought she raised her face to Heaven in supplication. Why was her horse so slow, she asked herself in agony. But it was only to her fevered imagination that the pace seemed slow; for scarcely the wind itself could pass them as they flew.

"Faster—faster!" she cried aloud; and even as the cry broke from her lips the church bells began to chime. She counted the strokes, and as eleven boomed forth a groan burst from her lips.

"Oh, God," she prayed, "help Bregenz, and bring me there in time!"

On and on the horse and rider galloped; and now, louder than the ringing bells, louder than the lowing of the startled kine that fled before their approach, the rushing of the Rhine river fell on the maiden's ears. The white horse drew back in terror as he reached the river's brink. Surely his rider could never mean him to attempt to ford that roaring torrent?

But the brave girl leant down and patted the horse's head. The bank was steep and high, and in the darkness it might well mean death to try to cross the river at this uncertain spot. Yet the maid's heart never faltered. It was the only chance for Bregenz—and she forced her steed forward. Staggering, he took the plunge; and then the two were engulfed in the dark waters.

The maid tried to pierce the blackness ahead of her, but she could see nothing. It was hopeless to attempt to guide her horse through the torrent, she must leave all to him; and throwing the rein loose, she sat calmly in the saddle, waiting for what might come.

Bravely did the white horse struggle to breast the water which dashed above his mane; nobly, gallantly he strove to force his way through the foam, as though he knew what great issues depended on his struggle. And at last he reached the farther shore and bore his burden up the steep bank to safety. And there, in the far distance, shone out the lights of home!

The worst part of their journey was over now, but there was still need for speed, and soon the horse and his rider were rushing onward again towards the heights of Bregenz which towered above them. And just as the midnight bell was about to ring in Bregenz they reached the gate, and soldiers and watchmen came running out to hear the news the brave girl had brought.

Bregenz was saved! Before daylight her battlements were manned, and bold defiance greeted the army that marched on the town next morning at dawn. She was saved by the humble serving-maid who had dared to risk her own life to bring the news which alone could save the town.

Three hundred years have passed, but upon the hill-side an old stone gateway rises to do honour still to the brave maiden. The women of Bregenz sit under its shade with their knitting, and often they tell the story of the maid's brave ride, while over their heads is engraved in quaint old carving a statue of the charger and his rider.

And when, to guard old Bregenz,
  By gateway, street and tower,
The warder paces all night long,
  And calls each passing hour;
"Nine," "ten," "eleven," he cries aloud,
  And then (Oh, crown of Fame!)
When midnight pauses in the skies,
  He calls the maiden's name!

The Bailiff's Daughter of Islington

ONCE there lived a youth, a squire's son, who was dearly loved by his parents. He was heir to great estates, and, as befitted one of his position, he was expected to make a wealthy marriage. But instead of courting some maiden with a fortune equal to his own, the young man fell deeply in love with the daughter of the Bailiff of Islington, who, however fair and sweet and desirable she might be, was certainly not the bride his father and mother would have chosen for him.

And, as might have been expected, when the young man's friends and relations discovered how dearly he loved the bailiff's daughter they were very angry indeed. They thought perhaps that if he were separated from the maiden he would forget his love for her, so they sent him far away to London town, where, in spite of his wealth and future expectations, they bound him to a tradesman as apprentice for seven years.

"In seven years' time," his father and mother said, "he will doubtless have quite recovered from his foolish fancy for this girl."

But they were wrong. The squire's son did not recover from his fancy. On the contrary, his love seemed to grow stronger with the passing of the years. He was bound by law not to leave his place until the time of his apprenticeship had passed; but although he could not see her he did not forget the bailiff's daughter. He thought of her day and night, and he made up his mind that a soon as he was free he would go at once to the little village of Islington and renew his suit for the hand of the maiden whom he loved so truly.

The bailiff's daughter was equally faithful. She to waited patiently till the seven long years had passed. An then, when they were nearly over, she determined to leav her home and go to the great town of London, to see i her lover was still true to her.

So one day, when there was a fair on in the villag and no one would notice her absence, because it was th custom for all the maids and young men to go out an dance and play on the village green, the bailiff's daughte dressed herself in ragged attire, disguised her face as wel as she could, and set out to walk to London.

She trudged bravely along the high road. The su shone down fiercely upon her, for it was the height o summer, and, presently, growing weary and footsore, sh sat herself down upon a green bank to rest awhile. Sh watched the people riding by, and perhaps she wished tha she too had a horse to carry her to her journey's end, fo she had still many miles to walk before she would reac London.

Now it happened that this was the very last day of th seven years, and as the bailiff's daughter sat by the road side her true love came riding by. He was free of hi apprenticeship at last, and now he was riding home agai to seek for the maiden whom he loved.

The bailiff's daughter recognised him at once, but th young man did not recognise her, for she was complete disguised in her ragged clothes. For a moment after sh had recognised him the maiden could neither speak nor move for joy and surprise; then, with a colour so red, she started up and caught at her lover's bridle-rein. She saw he took her for some beggar-maid, and a plan came into her head to discover whether he still was faithful and true.

She held out her hand, pretending to be in very truth the beggar she appeared.

"One penny—I pray you, kind sir, give me one penny," she said, trying to disguise her voice lest he should recognise it. "Only a penny—you will never miss it, and it will ease me of much pain."

The squire's son drew up his horse. He was ever kind and pitiful to poor people, and something about the beggar-girl seemed familiar to him. Had he seen her before, he wondered, and as he put his hand into his pocket, feeling for a coin, he looked at her searchingly.

"Before I give you a penny, sweetheart," he said, "I pray you tell me where you were born."

"I was born at Islington, sir," answered the pretended beggar-maid. Then, renewing her supplicating tone, she added whiningly: "Where I have had many a scorn and unkind word."

"At Islington!" cried the young man excitedly. "I pray you tell me then if you know the bailiff's daughter of Islington——"

"The bailiff's daughter of Islington!" interrupted the girl. "Why, yes, I know her, or, rather, *knew* her—for she is dead, sir, long ago!"

The squire's son gave a bitter cry, and bowed his head in his hands. Then he roused himself and sprang impetuously to the ground, flinging his horse's bridle-rein into the maiden's hand.

" If she be dead, take my horse, and my saddle and bridle also ! " he cried. " I have no further need of them now. All my joy in life is over. I will flee to some far country where no man shall know me ! "

The bailiff's daughter heard these words with joy and happiness in her heart. She sprang after the impulsive young man, who was already turning to go, and laid her hand on his arm.

" Stay, oh stay, thou goodly youth," she said, half laughing, half crying in her joy, and dropping all pretence of disguise. " Your true love is not dead. She is here before you, alive and well, and ready to be your bride."

The squire's son turned round and caught the maiden's hand. He stared at her long and earnestly ; then his face lightened and he flung his arms about her, clasping her close to his breast. It was indeed the maiden whom he loved, dearer than ever for the long absence. And now there was nothing to hinder him from making her his wife.

And so the bailiff's daughter of Islington found her own true love again.

The Knight's Tale

THERE was once a Duke of Athens named Theseus who was renowned throughout the world for his bravery and goodness. He had fought many battles and won many great victories, and it was while he was returning in triumph to Athens from one of his victorious campaigns that the story I am going to tell you about begins.

Just before Duke Theseus reached the town, which was all decorated with garlands of flowers to greet him, there met him a company of women, dressed in black robes, and weeping and mourning pitifully. Theseus stopped and asked them the meaning of their sorrow, and they told him that they had come from Thebes, a city which had lately been conquered by a tyrant named Creon. These ladies were all the wives of great lords who had died during the siege of the city, and now Creon, in his cruelty and tyranny, would not even suffer their husbands' dead bodies to be buried. And when the wives of these nobles had come to him and begged him to allow them to be buried, he had treated the ladies with such indignity that at last they had fled from the city, and now had come to Theseus to implore him to revenge their wrongs upon Creon.

Theseus was filled with indignation when he heard the ladies' sad story, and he swore an oath that he would not enter into Athens until he had taken vengeance upon the cruel Creon. Gathering his knights about him, he rode at once to Thebes, where he fought with Creon, and slew him in fair and open fight. Then he ordered that all the dead bodies of the nobles whom Creon had killed should be buried with great pomp and ceremony, and he restored to the ladies who had asked his help all the houses and lands which belonged to them by right.

Amongst the knights who had fought for Creon were two young men of noble lineage named Palamon and Arcite. They had been friends from childhood and loved one another dearly, and they had fought side by side in the battle against Theseus. Both of them had been wounded and left for dead upon the field, but after the fighting was over they were discovered by the soldiers of Theseus and found to be still alive, and when the Duke rode back to Athens he carried the two young knights with him as captives, and shut them up in a high tower in his castle grounds, where he decreed that they should remain imprisoned for the rest of their lives.

Palamon and Arcite were glad to be still together, for they loved one another more dearly than brothers. and once they had made a solemn vow that neither should ever stand in the other's way, either in love or honour or in any other thing. But they mourned their lost liberty bitterly, and longed for freedom again, that they might ride forth into the world and do deeds of valour and win honour and glory, as was fitting for young knights of their degree and estate.

Now Theseus had a young sister-in-law named Emilia who was more beautiful than any other maiden in the world. She was fairer even than the flowers that grew in the palace gardens, and her long soft hair, which she wore in a thick tress down her back, was as golden in hue as the sunbeams that played on the Duke's green lawns. And it happened that one May morning this lovely maiden rose up early and walked in the garden, plucking the roses, white and red, that grew there, which for all their sweetness were no sweeter than her own fair face. And as she wandered she came beneath the tower in which both Palamon and Arcite were imprisoned.

Palamon had also risen early from his hard prison bed that morning. He stood beside the barred window of his dungeon and gazed at the green world outside, while his heart welled up with bitterness to think that he would have to spend the rest of his life behind iron bars. And while he stood gazing Emilia came beneath his window, singing a joyful little song in the gladness of her heart, her hands filled with the dew-wet roses she had been gathering. As Palamon's eyes fell upon her he gave a cry, half of pain, half of rapture, at the exceeding fairness of her face.

Arcite, who was still lying drowsily on his bed, started up at his companion's cry.

" Ah, Palamon," he said sadly, " you are pale. Why did you so cry out? Was it in bitterness at the sadness of our fate? We must strive to bear our imprisonment patiently, since for us there is no escaping."

" Nay," answered Palamon, " it was not pain at our imprisonment that made me so cry out. I am wounded to the heart, as it were with a sharp arrow, for love of the lady who now walks below us in the garden. Never in my life have I seen such a beautiful face and form

—it must be the goddess Venus herself." And forthwith he fell down on his knees, crying aloud:

"Oh, Venus, beloved goddess, help us to escape from our prison that we may devote our lives to thy service."

Arcite rose to his feet and came and stood beside his friend that he too might see the lovely vision. And as his glance fell upon Emilia, wandering amongst her flowers, all unconscious of the wonder her beauty was exciting, her loveliness pierced his heart also, and he, like Palamon, fell at once madly and passionately in love with her.

"How beautiful she is!" he cried. "Save that I may see her beauty every day, I shall count myself but dead!"

At these words Palamon turned and looked at his friend from under knitted brows.

"Say you that in earnest or in play?" he asked.

"Nay, not in play," answered Arcite. "I say it in deepest earnest, for, in good faith, I have fallen in love with the maiden."

"Then you are a traitor to me!" cried Palamon. "Did we not swear that whether in love or in honour or in any other thing neither of us two would stand in the other's way? This was mine oath and thine—and now you would be false to it and love my lady, whom, though my heart break, I shall love until I die. You shall not love her, Arcite! I loved her first, and told you so. You are bound by your oath to help me win her, else are you false to your profession of friendship."

Arcite drew himself up proudly.

"It is you who are false," he said. "I loved her first. You thought her but a goddess and would have knelt to her in worship. It was I who first saw that she was a woman, therefore she is mine. Besides, a man must needs love where his heart leads him, and since love is above all law he cannot always keep his oath. And anyway it is not likely that either you or I will ever win her. We are condemned to eternal imprisonment, and this fair maiden is not for either of us."

But in spite of all reason the love between these two friends was broken from that moment. Each was jealous of the other, and their captivity became a sadder thing to both of them, since the friendship which had hitherto made their sorrow endurable was now no more. And day by day the two young knights fell more and more deeply in love with Emilia, and lived only for the happy moments when she came to walk in the Duke's garden.

It happened that Arcite had a great friend, a powerful duke, who was also a friend to Theseus. When this duke knew that Theseus held Arcite a prisoner, he sent a message to Theseus asking him to set Arcite free. And Theseus, for the love he bore his friend, at once released Arcite from his captivity and sent him back to his own city of Thebes, making it a condition, however, that he should never return to Athens upon pain of instant death.

But, although he was now free, Arcite did not thank his friend for procuring his release. Since he might never return to Athens, he would never more see Emilia; and it seemed to him that it would be better to be Palamon in prison, able to gaze upon her every day, than himself at liberty, never to see his lady any more.

" Oh, Palamon," he cried in the anguish of his heart, " I would that I were with you still in prison! Since I may not see my Emilia, I am but dead! "

Time passed on. Two or three years went by, yet still Arcite could not forget his love and sorrow. At last he made up his mind that he would risk everything and return to Athens.

"Even if I die," he said, "I shall at least have seen my lady again."

So he disguised himself as a poor wayfarer, and went to the Duke's court at Athens, where he begged for a place as a servant. He said that his name was Philostrate, and as it happened that there was a page's place vacant, he was engaged to fill it. And so it came to pass that he lived under the same roof as Emilia, and even had the great privilege of serving and waiting upon her. He did his work well, and he had such a brave and manly bearing that at last he won the favour of the Duke, who made him a squire of his chamber, and then he was able to see Emilia more frequently still.

For three years Arcite lived at the Duke's court, happy because he was at liberty to see his lady every day. And all the while, in his gloomy prison, poor Palamon languished in grief and despair. At length, however, fortune seemed to favour the poor prisoner. With the help of a friend he was able to escape, and under cover of darkness he fled out of the city.

It was summer time when Palamon escaped, and as the nights were short, daylight soon overtook the fugitive. He dared not travel by day, so he took refuge in a grove of thick trees a little way outside the city to wait for darkness to fall again. When the night came once more he intended to make his way back to Thebes and gather together a great army to make battle against Theseus and win Emilia for his wife.

The very morning after Palamon had escaped from prison Arcite rose up early and rode out of the city to gather a garland of flowers for his fair mistress, and it chanced that he came to the very grove where Palamon lay hid. He gathered his garland, and whilst he plucked the flowers he began to speak his thoughts aloud, all unconscious that he was doing so.

" Alas! " he sighed, " to think that I, Arcite, a descendant of the kings of Thebes, should be serving Duke Theseus as his humble squire! Here am I known as Philostrate, a man of no degree, and I am despised and looked down upon by knights who are far my inferiors. Yet I cannot break away from my bondage, for my love for Emilia is so great that I should die could I not see her every day. Alas! it was a sorry trick the gods played upon me when thus they bound my heart in thrall! "

Palamon, who was hidden close by in a thicket of bushes, could hear every word he said, and, recognising Arcite, he sprang to his feet and darted out from his hiding-place.

" Arcite, false traitor, I have found you! " he cried. " Now shall either you or I die, since we cannot both continue to love the same lady and live. Had I but a weapon I would soon put an end to our rivalry, but alas! I have only just escaped out of prison and am all unarmed. Nevertheless, with these naked hands will I attack you and endeavour to end your false life, unless you will swear to leave Emilia and never love her more."

Arcite pulled out his sword and faced Palamon angrily.

" I have as good a right to love her as you," he cried.

"Were it not that you are mad for love and all unarmed I would slay you here and now. Love is free, as you shall know ere long. But you are a very gentle, perfect knight, and so I may not take advantage of you unfairly. Here is my troth. To-morrow I will not fail to return to this place with weapons and armour for us both. Then will we fight for Emilia, and the one that wins the combat shall have her to wife."

"I am agreed," said Palamon, and then the two who had once been such faithful friends separated until the next morning.

At daybreak Arcite returned to the grove, bearing with him two suits of armour and weapons for them both. He and Palamon helped to array each other for battle, and then a fierce and mighty struggle began between the two. They fought desperately, and dealt each other many terrible wounds, and soon the red blood was flowing from both of them, staining all the grass whereon they stood.

Now it happened that Duke Theseus, when he awoke that morning, was seized with a great desire to hunt. So horses were saddled and bridled at once, and the Duke, with his hunting-men, accompanied by his wife and his wife's beautiful sister Emilia, rode out to the chase. And the hounds led the party straight to the grove where the two knights were fighting, and just as the combat was at its fiercest the Duke with his retinue appeared on the scene.

The hunting-party reined up their horses in amazement, and then, spurring his steed forward, the Duke rode in between the fighters, striking up their weapons with his sword.

" The Duke rode in between the fighters."

"Hold!" he cried. "The next man of you that smites a stroke shall be dead! What men are you that fight here in this unseemly manner, with neither judge nor officers to see that all be done in order?"

Palamon, seeing that it was the Duke himself, and half-blinded by love and fury, answered impetuously:

"Sir, you may kill us if you will, for we both deserve death. I am Palamon, your prisoner, whom you have kept for so many weary years in captivity. Now am I escaped from my prison, and since you have caught me again I shall be glad to die. And this other is Arcite, whom you set at liberty long ago, but who has broken your decree and has come to Athens, and has lived with you as Philostrate, your squire. We are fighting together for love of the queen's fair sister, Emilia, for whom we have both conceived a passionate devotion. Now kill us if you will. I for one am ready and eager to meet death."

The Duke was very angry when he heard this story and learnt how Arcite had deceived him. He would have had both of them put to death then and there had not his wife and Emilia fallen on their knees before him and begged him to spare the lives of the two young knights. They were moved to pity at the story of their sad love, and their tears and pleadings so touched the Duke that at last he consented to grant their request.

"For the sake of my wife and my fair sister Emilia, I freely forgive you both," he said to Palamon and Arcite, "but you must swear to me that you will never seek to harm me or my country if I let you go. And since both of you have this love for my sister, I will suggest a way by which one of you may win her. You are both of royal lineage, and I would gladly give her to either of you, but I cannot give her to both, and I have a plan by which you may decide which of you it shall be. You shall go whither you will, and this day fifty weeks you shall return, each bringing with you one hundred knights at arms. Then will I hold a great tournament, and you with your companies shall meet in the lists and do battle for Emilia. And whichever one of you is the conqueror, to him will I give my fair sister to wife. What say you? Does this meet with your desire?"

Palamon and Arcite fell down on their knees before Theseus, thanking him for his great kindness. Then they rose up, and after having taken leave of the company they rode homewards, each eager to begin his search for the hundred brave knights who were to aid him in the contest.

Days and weeks and months flew swiftly by, and soon the day appointed for the tournament drew near. Theseus had built a great walled enclosure where the fight was to take place, with seats all round it for the spectators. At each of the three entrances to the enclosure he had raised a temple to the three principal gods whom he worshipped. At the eastern gate he had built a temple for Venus, the goddess of love; at the western gate he had raised a temple to Mars, the god of war; and at the northern gate he had made one for Diana, the goddess of the chase. The temples were richly adorned with carvings and paintings, and each contained a statue of the god or goddess to whom it was dedicated.

At last came the eve of the great day. Palamon and

Arcite had arrived in Athens, each bringing with him a hundred knights, all brave and skilful at arms, and of great and noble descent, and all furnished with splendid weapons for the contest. Theseus welcomed his guests with great honour and made a feast for them in his palace, and thus the time till the tournament passed merrily away.

Although he had spent the greater part of the last night in feasting and singing, yet very early in the morning of the great day, before daybreak, Palamon arose and made his way to the temple of Venus which Theseus had erected by the field where the tournament was to be held. And there he prayed to the goddess to help him to obtain his heart's desire.

"I do not ask for victory," he said, "only that you will give me Emilia for my wife. If you will but grant me this great happiness, then will I serve and worship you all my life long; but if you will not grant my request, then I pray that I may be killed outright in the conflict, for death will be more welcome to me than life without my dear lady."

As he finished praying the statue of Venus before which he knelt seemed to quiver, and Palamon took the sign to mean that his prayer would be granted. Full of joy, he rose from his knees and went back to the palace, his heart overflowing with gladness to think that the great desire of his life would be at last fulfilled.

Emilia also rose up early that morning and hastened to the temple of Diana, to whom she in her turn made her petition.

"Oh, gentle goddess," she cried, "give me to the man who loves me best. And whether it be on Arcite or Palamon the lot shall fall, I pray that you will make peace again between these two—for I am sad indeed to think that it is through me their friendship has been broken."

As Emilia spoke one of the two lights burning on the altar flickered and went out. It was only for a moment, for almost immediately it sprang to life again and burnt more brightly than before; but as it sprang up the other light began to quiver and finally went out altogether. This light did not recover, and as she gazed at the altar, wondering what the sign might mean, Emilia was horrified to perceive that drops of blood were issuing from the candle-end.

As she knelt on, trembling, too frightened to move, the form of Diana herself suddenly appeared before her.

"Fear not, daughter," said the goddess kindly. "You are to be wedded to one of these young knights, but which I cannot tell you yet. Only this I promise you: it shall be to the one who loves you the most truly," and having thus spoken, the goddess disappeared, and Emilia took her homeward way full of awe and wonder.

A little later Arcite arose and entered the temple of Mars, the great god of war.

"Great lord of battle," he said, "I pray that you will grant my prayer. Give me the victory in the conflict, and I will serve you all the years I have to live. Give me the victory; I ask no more."

He finished his prayer, and suddenly the lights on the altar of Mars burnt up brightly, filling the whole temple with their brilliant light. And it seemed to Arcite that the statue of Mars moved its head as though nodding assent, while he seemed to hear a voice in the temple whispering "Victory." Happy and triumphant, the young knight hastened back to Athens, for he felt sure that the sign meant that he should conquer in the fight.

By this time the day had dawned. The sun rose up, bright and beautiful, and the preparations for the tournament went on apace. There was great feasting and rejoicing in the city of Athens that day. Everybody took a holiday and hastened out to the battlefield that they might witness the fray. There was noise and clattering in all the inns and hostelries. Horses were being harnessed and caparisoned, armour was being cleaned and polished, and soon the great field where the tournament was to take place was full to overflowing with lords and noble knights richly decked in armour, and with fair ladies in silks and embroideries, come out to watch the jousting.

Duke Theseus had made a decree that no knight was to kill another if he could possibly avoid it, for he wished to have no loss of life. If any knight was overcome, he was to be taken prisoner by his adversary and secured to stakes on the far side of the field. And whichever side should prove victorious, to the leader of that side should Emilia be given, whether it were Arcite or Palamon. Having given these instructions to the heralds and knights who were to act as judges and see that all was done in order and that everyone had fair play, the Duke rode out to the field with his wife and Emilia to watch the great battle.

And then began a struggle so mighty and fierce that none of those present had ever seen its like before. None could say which fought the better—the knights of Palamon or the knights of Arcite. Long and fierce was the conflict, and many were the blows given and received. All day long the battle raged, and the men on each side gradually dwindled down as one by one they were overcome and carried captive away. Yet still those who were left fought on, while the people who were watching cheered and shouted, spurring them on to fresh efforts.

Meanwhile, in the halls of Olympus where the gods were assembled, another great strife was taking place, this time between the goddess Venus and the great god Mars. Venus wished Palamon to gain the victory because she had promised that he should have Emilia for his wife; but Mars declared that Arcite must win because he had vowed to give him the victory.

"It is impossible that the god Mars should break his promise," he said, "therefore Arcite must win."

"Shall it be said, then, that Venus cannot keep her vows?" cried the enraged goddess. "I have promised Emilia to Palamon, therefore I say *he* must have the victory."

"And I," said Diana, "have promised Emilia for a husband the man who loves her best."

Jupiter, the chief of all the gods, was in a great difficulty. He tried to make peace between Venus and Mars, but neither would give in, and it seemed as though the matter would never be settled, when the god Saturn came to the rescue.

"If you will leave the matter to me," said Saturn, "I can manage it so that neither of you shall be forsworn. Mars shall keep his promise to Arcite, and Venus shall perform her vow to Palamon." And since none of the others could think of a way out of the difficulty, the gods and goddesses agreed to let Saturn do what he would.

Down below, in the world, the sun was beginning to sink, and the knights on both sides made a desperate effort to finish the contest. Palamon and Arcite, who had dealt each other many bitter blows during the long conflict, had met together again in one last fierce encounter when one of Arcite's knights ran his sword deep into Palamon's side. Palamon's followers fought valiantly, but Palamon was weak from pain and loss of blood, and in spite of all his knights could do he was drawn, struggling and fighting still, to the stake at the far side of the field where Arcite's prisoners were bound. And when Theseus saw that one of the leaders was taken he made his heralds blow a great blast on their trumpets to signify that the tournament was over.

"All has been done in fair fight," he cried. "Arcite is the victor, therefore he shall have Emilia to wife."

There was a great outburst of clapping from the spectators as he gave his decision, and Arcite, putting up his helm, rode forward in exultation. But above, in the halls of Olympus, Venus began to weep and rave in anger.

"Alas, alas!" she cried. "I am disgraced for ever! my vow is broken! Never more will men come to do sacrifice and offer up petitions at my altars, since they know I can no longer grant their prayers. My name will be scorned for ever on earth!"

"Hold your peace, my daughter, all will yet be well," said Saturn, with a smile. "Mars now is satisfied. His vow is fulfilled. His knight has obtained that for which he asked—victory in the fight. Now it remains to grant Palamon his desire. Wait but a little, and you, too, shall be satisfied.'' And calling Pluto, the god of the underground world, to his side, Saturn whispered a request.

Pluto nodded grimly, and just as Arcite rode forward to receive the palm of victory a miracle happened. The ground opened at his feet, and a flame of fire, sent by Pluto from the underground regions at Saturn's request, sprang upwards, which so terrified Arcite's horse that he leapt up and fell over backwards, throwing his rider heavily to the ground. The heralds and knights ran quickly to his side, but when they lifted Arcite up they found that he was so badly hurt that it seemed that he must die.

With great grief and sorrowing Arcite was carried back to Theseus' palace. Many of the knights who had fought in the great tournament were hurt, but none had been mortally injured, and with the salves and herbs and charms which the doctors gave them all were soon healed of their wounds. All except Arcite. He had been injured beyond all human help, and soon it was known that he could never recover.

When Arcite knew that he must die, he sent for Palamon and Emilia.

"Emilia, my sweet lady,'' he said, "I have loved you well and truly, but although I have won you I may not keep you, for the gods have decreed that I shall die. I pray you now to accept my service and my love, and since I may not give you my life I recommend to you Palamon, my friend and brother. In all this world I know of none so worthy to be loved as Palamon. I have borne ill-will towards him for many a day for your fair sake, but now that I am dying I have forgotten all else save the great love I once bore him. I pray that you will wed with him when I am gone."

Even as he spoke his breath failed and his eyes grew dim, and as he said the last word he sank back on his pillows and died.

Palamon and Emilia and the Duke Theseus, and all the people of Athens mourned for the brave young knight. Theseus made a great funeral for him, such as had never been seen in Athens before. But when all the mourning and weeping was over, the Duke sent for Palamon and told him that he was going to give him Emilia for his wife since he loved her so truly, and since, although he had been worsted in the tournament, yet it was no disgrace to him, for he had fought bravely and well. Emilia had learnt to love Palamon, and she gladly gave him her hand; and so at last, after long years, these two were wedded.

A great wedding ceremony took place in Athens, with much feasting and rejoicing, and the story goes that Palamon and Emilia lived happily ever after, loving each other so truly and tenderly that not one unkind or jealous word ever passed between them.

And that is the end of the Knight's Tale of Palamon and Arcite.

The Inchcape Rock

THE Abbot of Aberbrothok—or, as it is now called, Arbroath—was noted far and wide for his good deeds and his saintly life. He was always kind and considerate to others, and always ready to do all he could to help those in distress. Everybody who knew him loved him, except for one or two wicked people who could not bear to think that anyone could live so pure and good a life.

Amongst his many other good actions, the old Abbot had placed a warning bell on the dangerous rock which stood at the entrance to the Firth of Tay. This rock was known as the Inchcape Rock; and before the Abbot had placed the bell there it had been dreaded by all the mariners who ever sailed those waters; for at high tide it was completely hidden by the sea, and many a ship had run aground there. But now they dreaded it no longer. When the rock was covered by the tide, the waves caused the bell to ring out its warning, and the seamen, hearing it, knew in what direction to steer their course. And many were the blessings called down upon the good old Abbot for his thoughtfulness.

But there was one man who did not love the Abbot of Aberbrothok. Sir Ralph the Rover, as he was called, a brave but wicked man who sailed the high seas in his own ship, sinking and robbing other ships, rather despised and disliked him than otherwise. He had often heard of the Abbot's goodness and saintly manner of life, and as he hated all goodness he would gladly have done the old man an injury if he could. And one day, as the pirate ship was sailing by the Inchcape Rock, it seemed to the Rover that the opportunity had come, if not to injure the Abbot exactly, at least to vex and annoy him.

It was a calm, sunny day in spring. The air was warm and pleasant, and the sea-birds screamed joyously to one another as they circled to and fro above the water. The waves washed gently round the Inchcape Rock, rising and falling so little that they scarcely stirred the Abbot's bell. Sir Ralph was pacing up and down the deck of his ship, and as they sailed past the rock and his eye fell upon it, an idea came to him which made him laugh out loud. But, as his men well knew, the Rover's mirth meant wickedness.

" Men," he cried, " put out the boat, I want to row to the Inchcape Rock. I'll plague the priest who put that bell upon it ! " And he laughed again.

The boat was quickly lowered, for the Rover's word was law to his men, who lived in fear and awe of their captain. Sir Ralph sprang into it, and the crew rowed towards the rock ; and when they reached it Sir Ralph bent over from the boat and cut the bell from its moorings. Down into the green depths of the ocean it sank with a gurgling sound. The bubbles rose and burst around the place where it had disappeared, and Sir Ralph gave a malicious chuckle.

" The next who comes to the Inchcape Rock won't bless the Abbot of Aberbrothok," he said.

For many a day the Rover sailed the seas in his pirate ship, waylaying and plundering the rich merchant vessels as they came and went with their golden store; until at last, grown rich with all the treasure he had stolen, he turned his helm and steered back again once more to the coast of Scotland.

A thick haze obscured the sky as the pirates drew near to the Scottish shore. All day long a gale had been blowing, but now at evening it had died away. Yet the ship was still borne along by the swell of the tide, and the sailors grew fearful, for they could not tell whereabouts they were. It was so dark that they could not catch a glimpse of the land, yet they knew they could not be far from the shore.

Sir Ralph took his stand upon the deck and tried to cheer the failing hearts of his seamen.

"It will be lighter soon," he said encouragingly. "See, there is the moon rising already." But the seamen would not be encouraged.

"I wish I could hear the Inchcape Bell," said one of them in an undertone, and his wish was echoed by his companions in their hearts. A strange uneasiness had fallen upon them. They felt, in the darkness and gloom and the ominous silence that was all about them, as though some terrible doom threatened the ship.

Suddenly, with a sickening shock, the keel of the vessel struck against something which was submerged beneath the water. A shriek of despair and terror arose from the seamen.

"It is the Inchcape Rock!" they cried, and Sir Ralph the Rover tore his hair and poured out terrible curses upon himself as he realised that their cry was true. In the darkness he had run his ship against the very rock from which he had cut the warning bell. His own hand had brought his doom upon him.

The waves rushed in on every side, the ship began to sink, and the terrified seamen flung themselves headlong into the water, for they knew that it was only a matter of moments now before the vessel went down. Lower and lower she sank, until with one sudden plunge she dived below the surface of the sea. And as Sir Ralph felt the waters close above his head he heard a dreadful sound arising through the waves—the sound of a bell tolling, as though the fiends themselves were ringing a death-knell for him on the sunken Inchcape Rock.

The Boy and the Mantle

IT was Christmas-time, and in the great hall of his castle King Arthur was holding his court. He was surrounded by all the Knights of the Round Table, and by many fair and great ladies who were in attendance upon the Queen, the lady Guinevere, and they were all very merry and joyful, for in those days Christmas was kept as the greatest holiday of the year throughout all the length and breadth of England.

While the gay company was in the midst of all the feasting and dancing and singing a Fairy Boy suddenly appeared in the hall. He was dressed in rich garments, and over his arm he carried a mantle of wonderful shape and colour. Bowing low to King Arthur, he greeted him reverently.

"God save thee, brave King Arthur," he said, "and thy goodly Queen Guinevere beside. I have come hither to add my share to your Christmas cheer. Look at this mantle." Here the boy held up the garment and displayed its wonders to the assembled lords and ladies. "It is made of rich stuff and embroidered with silks of wondrous hue, meet to adorn the beauty of the fairest dame on earth. I have brought it here as a Christmas gift for the lady who can wear it. All who will may try it on, but I warn you that it will fit none save she who is tender and loving and pure of heart."

There was excitement and merriment in Arthur's hall as the Fairy Boy spoke. All the fair ladies present coveted the beautiful mantle, and each, in her heart of hearts, thought that she would certainly be the one to win it. Queen Guinevere herself was the first to come forward. She took the mantle from the boy and flung it over her shoulders, and then turned round that all might admire its wonderful silken folds.

But a dreadful thing had happened! It was quite evident that the Queen was not tender and loving and pure of heart, for the mantle did not fit her at all. It was all shrunken and unshapely. On one side it hung too short, on the other too long, and it lay in unsightly wrinkles on her shoulders, while its beautiful colours were all changed and faded to a sombre, ugly hue. The King and his knights and ladies stared at the Queen in dismay, and Guinevere burst into a storm of anger and flung away the magic mantle. She raved at the weaver who had made the garment, at the King and his knights for having seen her humiliation, and most of all at the Fairy Boy for having brought the robe to the court. And having thus shown by her display of temper how truly the mantle had spoken, she left the hall in a fury and retired to her own chamber.

The next lady to try on the mantle was the wife of Sir Kay, the King's seneschal. She came forward boldly and took it up, confident that she would win it for her own. But when she had put it on she was aghast to find that it would no more fit her than it would fit the Queen. She threw it off hastily and slunk away, pale and dismayed, amidst the mocking laughter of the court.

Then one by one the ladies of King Arthur's court came forward to try on the mantle, some of them laughing and joking at the ordeal, some shy and frightened. But the mantle would not fit any of them, and at last it seemed that there was not one lady in all King Arthur's court who was worthy to wear the magic garment. But at the end Sir Cradock, one of the bravest and noblest of King Arthur's knights, called his lady to him.

"Come, sweetheart," he said, "try on this mantle, and let me see how it becomes you." And his wife stepped forward, not daring to say her lord nay, but blushing and trembling to find herself the centre of interest amongst all that laughing throng. Yet she would not shame her husband in front of all those people, and plucking up all her courage she went to the Fairy Boy and took the mantle from him. Then, with a little prayer that she might not disgrace herself and her lord, she put it over her shoulders.

And at last it seemed as though somebody worthy to wear the mantle had been found, for it hung in perfect folds from her shoulders, and it kept its beautiful colour and did not change to an ugly hue as it had done before. But when the lords and ladies looked down at her feet, they saw that even yet the hem did not hang quite straight. There was one big ugly wrinkle at the bottom, and Sir Cradock's wife, looking down and seeing it, blushed red with shame. She was not quite worthy to wear the mantle, for once she had sinned. It was not a very big sin, but it weighed heavily upon her tender conscience, and she knew at once why the mantle did not hang quite straight.

But although she was shy and quiet as a rule, yet she was brave and courageous at heart, and lifting her head

"There was one big ugly wrinkle at the bottom."

she spoke to the assembled company, telling them of her little sin. And as she confessed her fault the wrinkle in the hem of the mantle suddenly disappeared. The garment hung now in perfect folds, and its colours became so dazzlingly beautiful that the sight of the lovely lady in her beautiful robe filled everybody present with wonder and admiration. The King himself came forward with a courtly grace, and bowed and kissed her hand; and Sir Cradock's heart glowed with love and pride for his beautiful wife, who alone of all the ladies present was judged worthy to wear the fairy mantle.

Then the Fairy Boy drew from his bosom a tiny wand, which he waved over a great boar's head that stood on the King's table.

"None but the worthiest knight may carve that boar's head," he cried; and he stood aside with a smile on his lips as all the knights began to sharpen their knives and swords in order to try their skill at this seemingly simple task.

But the task was not so simple as it looked. The boar's head seemed as though it had been turned into stone, for all the blades were blunted as soon as the knights attempted to carve it, and none could cut off the smallest morsel until Sir Cradock came forward to try his fortune. He had only a very small knife, but it was large enough for his purpose, for he thrust in the blade easily and carved the boar's head so that every knight in Arthur's court might have a slice.

The Fairy Boy was not yet quite contented, however. This time he brought a drinking-horn with a golden rim.

"See," he said, "none can drink from this horn save he whose wife loves him the truest."

Once more the knights pressed forward to make this new trial, but not one of them could lift the cup to their lips. Some spilt the wine as soon as ever they took the horn into their hands, others as soon as ever they began to get it near their faces. Some could only lift it to their noses; some might only carry it to their eyes. None could bring it near their mouth until once more it came to Sir Cradock's turn to try. But when Sir Cradock took the horn into his hands, he lifted it to his lips as easily as though it had been an ordinary drinking-cup, and drank up the wine.

So Sir Cradock won the golden horn, and his lady the fairy mantle, and thus proved themselves the best and worthiest and truest of all the knights and ladies in King Arthur's court.

Evangeline

MORE than two hundred years ago, in the colony of Nova Scotia, in the little village of Grand Pré, which nestled in a fruitful valley between the shores of the great Atlantic Ocean and the vast, primeval forests of America, there lived a wealthy farmer named Benedict Bellefontaine. His wife was dead long before this story opens, but the farmer's only child, Evangeline, a beautiful girl of seventeen, lived with him, directing his household and ordering all things beneath his comfortable roof.

Evangeline was very lovely. Her eyes were black as the berries that grew on the bramble-bushes by the wayside, but so soft and tender that they seemed to shine almost with celestial light beneath the brown shadow of her hair. Yet for all that her eyes were so dark, her skin was as fair and clear as a maiden's skin could be. She was the most beautiful girl in the whole of the village, and as she was as sweet and good as she was beautiful, it was little wonder that all the young men from near and far came to woo her, and that old men gazed at her with love and reverence as she passed on her way.

But there was only one young man who received any encouragement from Evangeline, and that was Gabriel, the son of Basil Lajeunesse, the sturdy village blacksmith. Basil was Benedict's great friend, and Gabriel and

Evangeline had been brought up together since they were tiny children. Father Felician, the old priest, had taught them their lessons together; and now that they had grown up and passed beyond his care, he hoped soon to have the happiness of uniting them in marriage. For the match was approved by both families, and even now the lawyer, René Leblanc, was engaged in drawing up the wedding contract. As soon as that was duly signed and sealed, the lovers were to be married.

The lawyer was not long over his task, and one evening in the autumn, when the nights were growing colder and colder, and the harvests had all been gathered in, Basil and his son came to Benedict's house to ratify the contract of marriage between Gabriel and Evangeline. It was a happy evening for the two young people, and for their elders, for it had long been the desire of the two old friends that their children should be thus united, and so make the friendship between them even firmer and closer than it was at present. Yet, in spite of his joy that the wishes of so many years were at last to be fulfilled, Basil the blacksmith was oppressed by a sense of uneasiness. The relations between Nova Scotia and the Mother Country were none too friendly at that time, and only four days ago a fleet of English ships had anchored in the bay and had trained their cannon against the little village of Grand Pré. None knew what their design might be, but the hearts of the elders of the village were filled with foreboding.

A few years before, the colony of Nova Scotia had been seceded to England by the French. Nearly all the inhabitants were of French descent, and it was very unwillingly indeed that they had signed the oath of allegiance to their new country. Soon after the colony had passed into British possession war had again broken out between the English and the French in Canada; and there were some who said that the people of Nova Scotia had helped the French with arms and food. Whether this accusation was true or not had never been fully ascertained; but the news had come to the ears of the British Government, and there were rumours that England, full of anger at the disloyalty of her new subjects, was planning drastic punishment for them. What this punishment might be was not yet known; but when the British ships appeared off the coast it was natural that the Nova Scotians should feel some anxiety—more especially since the Governor of the colony had issued a notice requiring all the men of Grand Pré to meet him on the morrow in the church, when the King of England's proclamation was to be read aloud.

But Benedict Bellefontaine was not troubled by any forebodings. He laughed at Basil's fears and said cheerfully:

"Nay, friend, why look so blackly on what, after all, may be but rumours? Perhaps some friendlier purpose than you imagine brings these ships to our shores. Mayhap the harvests in England have been blighted by untimely rains or untimelier heat, and they have but come to take of our abundance lest their own women and children starve."

But Basil shook his head gloomily.

"Not so think the folk of the village," he answered. "Many have already fled to the forest, waiting there with anxious hearts for what may come on the morrow. The worst of it is we are wholly in their power whatever they may choose to do. All our arms have been taken from us—we have nothing but farm implements and workmen's tools to oppose to their trained bands. If they do indeed mean us ill we can do naught but submit to their will."

The jovial farmer smiled again.

"To my way of thinking we are safer unarmed than if every man amongst us bore a loaded weapon. Fear no evil, my friend. To-night let no shadow of sorrow fall on this house and hearth. The house for our children is built, and the barns are filled with food and hay for a twelvemonth. René Leblanc will be here directly with his papers and ink-horn; and then there will be nothing more to do but sign the papers and see the priest. Let us put aside all care then, and rejoice in the joy of our children."

Even as he spoke the old lawyer entered, a man who had had twenty children of his own, and more than a hundred grandchildren. Soon the papers were signed and sealed, and then the old lawyer rose to his feet and drank to the health of the bride and the bridegroom in a tankard of ale which Evangeline brought him. And when he had left, while Basil and Benedict played a game of draughts, Gabriel and Evangeline sat, half hidden in the deep embrasure of the window, gazing out over the sea—watching the moon rise slowly over the silver mist of the meadows, and the stars, the forget-me-nots of the angels, blossom out one by one in the darkening sky.

The happy evening passed away all too quickly. Soon the village curfew bell rang out the hour of nine; Basil and his son said good-bye and departed, and silence reigned in the farmer's house. Evangeline went upstairs to her chamber and set down her lighted lamp, pausing for one moment to gaze out once more into the still, beautiful night. Her heart was filled with thoughts of her lover, who, although she did not know it, stood below in the orchard, watching her shadow as she passed to and fro, waiting until her light should be extinguished, and he should know that she was safe in bed. Little did either of these two young things dream of the morrow and all the sorrow and misery and loneliness in store for them.

The next day dawned fine and clear, and at the appointed hour the men of the village went to the church to meet the Governor. Soon the building was thronged with men, while the women waited in their homes, or else thronged the graveyard to see the guards from the ships march by in front of the Governor. The men came marching up from the shore in steady order. They were fully armed, the villagers noticed with misgiving, and when they had entered the church the doors were shut fast behind them.

The farmers and villagers stood up in grave dignity to hear the King's mandate as the Governor mounted the steps of the altar and turned to face them. In his hand he held the royal commission.

" You are convened here this day by His Majesty's orders," the Governor began. " His Majesty has shown you much clemency and kindness, but your own hearts can tell you how you have requited his kindness. The duty which I have now to do is very painful to me, for I know how grievous His Majesty's decree will be to you. Yet must I bow and obey and deliver to you the command of our Monarch—which is that your lands and your dwelling-places, and all your goods and cattle, are forfeited to the crown, and that you yourselves, with your wives and children, are to be transported to other lands.

God grant that you may dwell in your new country more peaceably than you have done here. Until the time comes for your embarkation you are to remain in this church as prisoners, for such is His Majesty's good pleasure."

The villagers could hardly believe that they had heard aright as this decree, so much more terrible than anything they had ever dreamed of, fell upon their ears. For a moment, in speechless horror and indignation, they kept silence; then suddenly there arose a loud wail of anger and sorrow, and moved by a common impulse they turned to rush the door. But it was firmly barred and held against them, and they saw that there was no escape for them that way. Cries and fierce imprecations rang through the house of prayer, and the more fiery spirits amongst the imprisoned men would have rushed upon the soldiers and endeavoured to overcome them. A hopeless endeavour it would have been, and one foredoomed to disaster. But as the tumult was at its height the door of the chancel opened, and the old priest, Father Felician, ascended the steps of the altar. He raised his hand for silence, and when a hush was made he spoke to his people tenderly and seriously, pointing out the hopelessness of their making any resistance, and exhorting them to bear their wrongs patiently. He pointed to the crucifix which hung above the altar.

"See where the crucified Christ gazes upon you from His Cross," he said rebukingly. "See what meekness and compassion shine from those sorrowful eyes. Hark how those lips still repeat the prayer, 'Father, forgive them.' Let us repeat that prayer now, in this hour when the wicked so grievously assail us."

Deep into the hearts of the people sank the old man's words, and sobs of penitence succeeded that first passionate outburst of anger. The simple, God-fearing men, following the teaching of the good old man who had been their guide and friend for so many years, sank upon their knees and repeated after him the prayer, " Father, forgive them."

Meanwhile, outside in the village, the terrible tidings had sped fast, and women and children wandered on all sides, weeping and wailing. Evangeline, left all alone in her father's house, felt at first very helpless, very lonely, very deserted when she heard the news; but after a while a more trustful spirit came to her. She stood at her father's door for a long time, watching the rays of the setting sun as they slowly descended over the thatched roofs of the village. God would take care of her and her dear ones whatever might betide, she told herself; and then, trying to forget her own sorrow and anxiety, she went down into the village, cheering the desolate women with her quiet looks and words, doing her best in her humble way to lighten the load of misery around her.

Presently, when all the children had been put to bed and the village street was deserted, she wandered up to the churchyard and listened at the doors and windows. But she could hear nothing of the prisoners within. Once she cried aloud in a faint, tremulous voice, " Gabriel," but no answer came, and at last she returned to her father's house.

It was a sad, dreary evening, filled with terror and foreboding, very different from the evening before when she and Gabriel had been so happy together. In the night there was a terrific thunderstorm, but in some strange way the tempest seemed to soothe the maiden's spirit. The voice of the echoing thunder seemed to tell her that God was in his heaven, still governing the world He had created; and, hushed by the storm, Evangeline fell asleep at last and slumbered peacefully until the morning.

For four long days the men of the village were kept prisoners in the church. On the fifth day orders came for the people to go down to the shore and embark on board the ships. The women and children were gathered on the beach with such of their personal possessions as they were to be allowed to take with them into exile; and then the men were marched down from the church and allowed to mingle with their wives and children once more.

Many of the women were overcome with grief as they waited for their sons and husbands to join them; but Evangeline, brave and strong even in this affliction, waited eagerly as the mournful procession descended to the shore. She caught sight of Gabriel first, and when she saw his face, pale and convulsed with emotion, she forgot the onlookers and ran quickly to his side.

"Gabriel!" she said, clasping his hands and laying her head tenderly against his shoulder. "Gabriel, be of good cheer. If we love one another nothing can really harm us."

She smiled bravely up into his eyes, although her own were filled with tears. Then she paused, for behind Gabriel she saw her father. Benedict was walking slowly and feebly, as though overcome with the weight of his years. The glow of health was gone from his cheeks, the fire from his eyes. He was bowed down with the affliction that had come upon him—he who had always been so cheerful, so hopeful, so full of joy and confidence. Evangeline left her lover's side and ran to her father, putting her strong young arms about him, and speaking soft, tender words of endearment and comfort.

Now began a time of sorrow and confusion for the villagers of Grand Pré. To and fro plied the boats between the ships and the shore; and in the haste and disorder wives were torn from their husbands and mothers were separated from their children and carried to different ships. Basil and Gabriel were placed in one boat and taken away, while Evangeline and her father were left behind on the beach. When daylight ended half the task was still unfinished, and the unfortunate people who still remained, Evangeline and her father amongst them, were forced to camp for the night herded together on the shore, guarded relentlessly by the soldiers.

Evangeline and her father sat somewhat apart from the others, beside one of the fires the people had kindled. Benedict sat with a vacant look on his face, as though his sufferings had taken all hope and thought and feeling from him. In vain did Evangeline offer him food and drink, and strive to cheer him with tender caresses and words of hope and love. He would neither eat nor speak, but sat motionless and still, huddled upon the ground.

Father Felician, who alone of all the people left on shore seemed able to rise above his personal sorrow, wandered from group to group, speaking words of comfort and hope to the stricken villagers. But when he came to where Evangeline sat with her father the words of comfort he would have spoken were hushed on his lips, and the tears came into his eyes. Silently he laid his hand on the maiden's head, lifting his face in an agony of supplication to where the stars moved unperturbed upon their way. Then he sat down beside Evangeline and joined her sad watch.

But there was yet another trial in store for these poor, unhappy people. In the night the soldiers, by the order of the Governor, set fire to the village, and those on the shore, and those far off on board the ships, were obliged to watch their homes, in which they had led such happy, peaceful lives, burnt to the ground. A great cry of sorrow and anger arose from the crowd on the shore; only Evangeline and the old priest and the stricken farmer still sat silently enduring their wrongs. But when Evangeline turned once to speak to her father, she found that he had fallen from his seat, and lay stretched out motionless upon the sands. The grief and suffering of the last few days had been too much for him, and his spirit had departed.

In a sudden access of terror Evangeline knelt down at her father's side, while the old priest, with shaking hands, lifted up the old man's lifeless head. Then, as she suddenly realised that her father was dead, the maiden gave a cry of anguish and terror, and sank down in a swoon with her head upon the old man's breast. All through that long night she lay unconscious; then, as morning came, she opened her eyes, and seeing herself in the midst of pitying friendly faces, the remembrance of her grief rushed back upon her. But she had no time to indulge her sorrow, for already the soldiers were getting ready to embark those who were still on shore. She turned to Father Felician, the only near friend left to her now, and the priest divined what she would say.

"We will bury him here by the sea," he said gently, "and when a happier time brings us back from our exile, his dust shall be laid in the churchyard." And there, on the seashore, without bell or book, the body of the farmer was buried in haste, with the light of the burning village for a funeral torch. Then the embarkation began once more, and before the day was over the ships sailed out of the harbour, leaving the village behind them in ruins, and carrying the broken-hearted exiles to seek a new home in a strange land.

Even now the cruelty of the enemy was not over. The ships landed the exiles on different coasts, and families, torn asunder during the embarkation, found themselves separated from their dear ones. Fathers and mothers were bereaved of their children; children were left, helpless and desolate, to the mercy of mere acquaintances. And in those days when letters were so few and far between, and there were no railways or fast-sailing vessels, it was impossible in many cases for friends ever to come together again.

Evangeline was one of those who had lost all her dear ones. Her father was left behind on the shores of their own country, and Gabriel, her lover, was gone she knew not whither. Father Felician was her principal guide and friend, and with him she wandered from city to city with the little band of exiles amongst whom she had been landed. Everywhere she went she asked eagerly for tidings of Gabriel. Often she heard of him, but she could gather no definite news. Some said that he was in one place, some in another, but no one seemed able to say for certain where he was. Still Evangeline did not lose hope, but went about searching for him, trusting that

God would be good to her and give her back her lover one day.

Years passed on, and still Evangeline waited and hoped for Gabriel's coming. But Gabriel did not come, and at last she began to wonder if her lover could be dead. Many of the young men who remained with her party desired her hand in marriage, and the older of her friends advised her to accept one of her suitors.

"Are there not other youths as good as Gabriel, dear child," they said, "others who have hearts as tender and true and spirits as loyal? You are too fair to be left unmarried. There is Baptiste Leblanc, the lawyer's son, who has loved you for many a weary year. Come, put away your grief, and love him and be happy."

But Evangeline would only smile at them sadly, saying:

"I cannot. My hand must follow where my heart has gone, and not elsewhere."

The old priest, Father Felician, Evangeline's constant and unchanging friend, approved her resolution.

"It is God who speaks thus within thee, my daughter," he once said to her. "There is no need to talk of wasted affection. Affection never is wasted. If it enrich not the heart of another, it will return to its spring and fill thine own heart full of refreshment. Have patience, accomplish thy labour of love. By thy suffering thy heart shall be made God-like and rendered more worthy of Heaven."

Cheered by the good man's words, Evangeline waited, and went about labouring amongst those of her acquaintances who were sad and in want. In her heart a voice seemed to whisper, "Despair not," and buoyed up with the hope that she might yet find her lover she lived on, still constant, still true, still brave and patient.

Time passed on, and at last the little band of exiles amongst whom Evangeline's lot was cast came to a town on the banks of the River Teche in America. As they drew near to their goal the hearts of the wanderers grew eager with expectation, for they had heard that many of the exiles from Grand Pré had come to live in this place, and there was none amongst them but hoped to find some long-lost friend or relation. The latter part of the journey was made by water, and as it came to the last night before the town was reached there were many happy, hopeful hearts amongst the exiles. Evangeline in particular was filled with hope and joy, for someone had told her that Gabriel Lajeunesse was living in this place. The travellers landed for the night upon the banks of the river, and Evangeline lay down to sleep with her companions on the greensward and slept peacefully, dreaming of her lover, for she felt sure that she was near him at last.

But in the night, while the little band of wanderers slept, a light boat came swiftly down the river. In the prow of this boat sat a young man with a thoughtful, careworn countenance and a sadness somewhat beyond his years written upon his features. It was Gabriel, who, weary of waiting for Evangeline any longer, had set out once more to search for her, although all his previous years of seeking had been without avail. The raft in which the exiles had journeyed up the river was hidden from the occupants of the boat, and the little craft sped rapidly by bearing Gabriel, not nearer to, but farther from his long-lost bride. And Evangeline, unconscious of his nearness, slept peacefully on!

The next day the party came to the town where they hoped to find a home, and the first person to greet them was Basil, the blacksmith of Grand Pré. There was joy and rejoicing for many of the exiles, and many happy reunions took place; but—alas for Evangeline! The very first news she heard was that Gabriel had left his new home the night before to search through the world until he found her.

"Gone! Is Gabriel gone?" she said; and overcome by this fresh blow she laid her head on the good blacksmith's shoulder and wept as she had not wept since her trials began. Basil and the good old priest tried to comfort her, and at last the former said cheerily:

"Be of good cheer, child. The boy only left to-day because he could no longer bear the calm of this quiet existence. He was ever thinking and speaking of thee until at last, thinking to divert his thoughts from his grief, I sent him on this journey to the town of Adayes to trade for mules with the Spaniards, and he, hoping to gain some news of his beloved, consented to go. From Adayes he will follow the Indian trails to the forest, but do not fret thyself. We will follow this fugitive lover. He is not far on his way, and the streams are against him; to-morrow we will up and away and bring him back."

Basil had grown rich in this new land. He had many herds and flocks, and he had built himself a fine, strong house. He could well afford to spend the time on the journey he now proposed to take. And after he had entertained the weary travellers that night, and left them comfortably provided for during his absence, he set out with Evangeline and the necessary boatmen to bring back his son. Father Felician bade the travellers God-speed as he stood on the threshold the next morning to see them off.

"See that you bring back this prodigal son," he said, smiling, "and do not lose the foolish virgin who slept when the bridegroom was coming." And Evangeline smiled a farewell at him through her tears as she set out once more to seek her lover.

Swiftly they followed upon Gabriel's trail. But they did not overtake him that day, as Evangeline had half hoped they might, nor the next day, nor the day after that. Week after week they followed his track, guided by vague and uncertain rumours, until at last they reached the little Spanish town of Adayes. Weary and worn, they alighted from their horses, only to learn from the landlord of the one little inn the place possessed that Gabriel had left the day before, with guides and horses, to follow the road across the prairie.

In spite of this fresh disappointment the brave girl would not give up her search. Accompanied by Basil, she set out next day to try to overtake Gabriel, and, attended by their Indian guides, the two journeyed through the wide prairie lands of the west, with the great mountains standing above them lifting their heads through perpetual snows to the vast dome of heaven and gazing down unmoved upon the waving plains of grass below. Each day the pursuers hoped to overtake Gabriel. Sometimes they saw, or thought they saw, the smoke of his camp fire rising from some distant plain, but when they reached the spot they would find only dying embers and dead ashes. Yet, though their hearts were sad at times and their bodies weary, hope still led them on.

At last they came to an Indian village where a little Catholic mission church was established. The mission was ruled over by a wise old priest and a few faithful servants of the Church, who ministered to the bodily needs of the Indians and tried to teach them something of the love of the good Spirit whom they worshipped. And here at last Basil and Evangeline learnt definite news of Gabriel.

"Only a few days ago he was sitting here by my side," said the priest, when the travellers asked him eagerly for news of the wanderer. "He told me his sad story, how he has lost the maiden whom he loves, and can find no trace of her. A little while only he remained with me, and then he arose and continued his journey. He has gone now far away to the north, but when the autumn comes he will return here to the mission."

Evangeline gave a little gesture of despair as the priest's words fell upon her ear. Then she turned to him with meekness and submission.

"Let me stay here?" she said wearily. "My soul is filled with sadness and I am so tired. Let me remain here with you, and perhaps in the autumn Gabriel will come and fetch me."

This plan seemed wise both to the priest and Basil. It was impossible for Evangeline to travel farther into the wilderness after her lover, and Basil had not the heart to take her away. So on the morrow the good man said good-bye to the girl, and mounting his Mexican steed, he departed slowly homeward with his guides, leaving Evangeline at the mission.

Slowly, slowly, slowly the days succeeded one another. Days, weeks and months passed away, and now the fields of maize, which when Evangeline came to the mission were only just springing up green and tender from the ground, were waving their slender shafts high above her head. The time for gathering in the harvest came, but autumn did not bring Evangeline her lover.

"Patience," the priest would say, as he saw the sadness deepening on her sweet face. "Have but faith, and thy prayer will surely be answered." And Evangeline tried to have faith; but the autumn passed, and the winter, and then came spring, and still Gabriel did not come.

With the summer rumour reached the mission that Gabriel had built himself a little lodge beside the Saginaw River, where he lived the wild, free life of the hunter and trapper. A company of guides was returning to this place, and Evangeline, bidding good-bye to the priest who had been so kind to her, set out with them, hoping this time to find her lover.

But once more fate was against her. She reached the lodge only to find it empty and deserted. Gabriel had fled once more!

Then for a long, long time Evangeline wandered to and fro, searching for Gabriel. Every year her heart grew sadder and sadder, and her soul and spirit cried out more and more passionately for Gabriel's love and companionship. Like a phantom she came, like a phantom she passed away unremembered from the cities where she sojourned for the night. She was young and fair when the long journey began; she was faded and old when at last it ended in disappointment. Each succeeding year stole something away from her beauty and left a deeper shade of sorrow and regret on her sweet face. And at last, too old and tired to journey any longer, Evangeline came to rest in the quiet little Quaker town of Penn.

There was something about the friendly streets of the quiet little city that appealed to Evangeline's heart. Her ear was pleased with the "thee" and "thou" of the Quaker speech: it semed to recall in some way the happy village of her childhood; and here she made up her mind to stay, her long, fruitless search ended at last. Gabriel was not forgotten, but after she had lived in the quiet atmosphere of the little town for a time some of her hopeless pain and longing seemed to pass away, and peace descended upon her troubled mind. Over her thoughts of her lover time had no power. Within her heart she bore his image, clothed still in youth and beauty as when she had last beheld him. He had become to her as one who is dead but not absent. And when she had rested a little from the fatigues of her long journey she sought and found work amongst the poor people of the town. Her life of sorrow and disappointment had taught her patience and abnegation of self and devotion to others. With reverent steps she lived at the feet of her Saviour, and as a Sister of Mercy she moved amongst the lowliest, wretchedest streets of the town, ministering to the sick and bringing comfort and hope to the dying. Wherever her footsteps passed she seemed to bring peace, and many were the blessings that followed her and the eyes that lighted up when she appeared.

So she lived, leading year by year a lovelier and still more useful life. And after many years had passed it happened that a terrible pestilence fell upon the city. Men, women and children died in hundreds, and all the almshouses and hospitals were full to overflowing with sick and dying people. Evangeline, the Sister of Mercy, toiled early and late at one of the poorest and most necessitous of the improvised hospitals. Day and night she worked incessantly amongst the sick, taking only the barest time needful away for rest and sleep, and many a dying face looked up into her calm, sweet eyes with love and confidence, thinking to see indeed gleams of celestial light encircling her forehead.

One quiet Sabbath morning she came as usual, wending her way through the silent streets to the bedsides of her suffering patients. In her hands she carried a great bunch of flowers, that the dying might rejoice once more in their fragrance and coolness. Her heart was filled with a great calm; it seemed to her that a voice was telling her that all her trials were over. With a light footstep, and with love and tenderness shining from her eyes, she entered the place of sickness and took her place amongst the attendants. Death had been busy during the night, and as she looked around she saw that many familiar forms had disappeared in her absence, their places being already filled with strangers.

Suddenly Evangeline stood still. A shudder ran through her frame and from her face the light of the morning vanished. Then a terrible cry of anguish escaped from her lips. Upon a pallet before her was stretched the form of an old, old man. Long and thin and grey were the locks that shaded his temples, pale and worn and wrinkled was the countenance that had once been so brown and ruddy and fresh. But as he lay there with the morning sunshine upon him his face seemed to assume for a moment the appearance of his earlier manhood, and to the eyes that loved him age could not conceal his identity.

"Gabriel! Oh, my beloved!" Evangeline cried; and at the sound of her voice the old man opened his dim eyes. Evangeline sank on her knees beside him; and even as she had recognised him, so did the dying man recognise the maiden he had loved so long ago. He tried to utter her name, he strove to rise and throw his arms about her; but although he was too weak to move or speak, Evangeline knew his intention. She lifted him up in her arms and kissed his dying lips, and for one moment these two who had loved each other so tenderly and truly, and had been so cruelly parted, gazed deep into each other's eyes. What they read there they alone knew, but it was something so sweet and precious that it almost made amends even for those long sad years of waiting and separation.

Then the sick man died, and Evangeline laid his body gently back on the bed. All was ended now: the hope, the fear, the sorrow, the restless, unsatisfied longing, and the deep, dull pain of suspense. Meekly Evangeline bowed her head, then, lifting her heart to the God who had strengthened and sustained her through all her trials, she murmured submissively:

"Father, I thank Thee!"

* * * * *

Far away from the site of the little village of Grand Pré, far away from the great forest beneath whose shadow two children once played, under the humble walls of a little Catholic churchyard two lovers are sleeping side by side in their nameless graves. In the heart of the city they lie, while the tide of life sweeps by them daily, unknowing and unnoticing. They are at rest for ever now. Their hearts no longer ache, their hands have ceased from their labours, their feet have completed the long weary journey. Another race of people has sprung up in Nova Scotia, but here and there along the shore are the descendants of some of the old families, the children of whom found their way back to the home of their fathers. And sometimes in the evenings, in some fisherman's cottage, the story of Evangeline is repeated —how she was torn from her lover's side in the springtime of her youth and happiness, and how, when she was an old, old woman, she found him again, only to see him die in her arms.

It is a sad story, but in spite of its sadness it is full of comfort too. For death cannot divide those who love one another. Whatever our beliefs may be, whatever creeds we hold, whatever faiths we may reject, deep within the heart of every one of us is hidden the great, strong conviction of the eternity of love. And so may we not believe that the souls of these two lovers are alive somewhere together, happy in the joy which has come to them at last?

The Goose

ONCE upon a time there lived an old woman so old and poor and ragged and miserable that there could hardly have been anyone in the whole world more wretched. The cottage where she lived was old and tumbled-down. The windows were so broken, the doors fitted so badly, and there were such great cracks in the walls, that the wind blew in through all the crevices and made the house almost as cold as the world outside. And that was very cold indeed, for the weather was wild and windy and stormy on the day when my story begins.

The poor old woman, crouched in the least draughty corner of the cottage, held her ragged clothes around her as best she could and listened to the storm which was raging without. Almost she wished that the wind would blow down the cottage altogether and bury her in its ruins. Then, at least, she thought to herself, she would be out of her misery, and would feel the icy blast no more.

But suddenly as she sat there shivering and groaning the creaky old door flew open, and a stranger strode into the room. He was a very queer-looking stranger indeed, and upon his arm he held a white goose. He did not wait to apologise to the old woman for his abrupt entrance, but, thrusting the goose into her shaking hands, he said:

"Here, take the goose and keep you warm. It is a stormy season." And the next moment he was gone.

The old woman clutched the goose by the leg and rubbed her eyes in astonishment. But seeing that the stranger had quite certainly disappeared and evidently meant the bird for her, she looked at it critically. A goose! It wasn't much to make a fuss about! And as for warming her—well, one goose wouldn't go far towards doing that! Still, a goose was a goose, and it would make her a meal or two, or maybe it would fetch a few shillings in the village if she could find a purchaser. She might as well put it somewhere safe for the present anyway; and when the storm grew a little less violent she would go down into the village and see what it would fetch.

But just at that moment, with a great clutter and a vast amount of cackling, the goose let fall a golden egg in her lap. The old woman let go the goose and caught up the egg in great excitement. Yes—it really was gold—and forgetting all about the furious storm which was raging, she ran out to tell her neighbours of the good fortune that had befallen her.

And now came a good time indeed for the old woman. She was poor no longer, for every day the wonderful goose laid a golden egg; and the old woman grew richer and richer, until at last everybody in the village bowed and nodded to her, and treated her as though she was a person of great distinction. Which, indeed, she was with her great wealth, that increased every day. Her cottage was no longer ruined and tumbled-down. It was patched and repaired, and added to and extended, until it was quite a fine building. As for the old woman, she no longer toiled and slaved for a few pence to keep body and soul together.

Instead, she lived in great comfort and luxury, with maidservants and menservants to wait upon her, rich food to eat, soft armchairs to sit in, and fine clothes to wear. She grew quite plump and strong, and forgot all about how miserable and wretched she used to be, in her pride and pleasure in her new-found wealth.

But in spite of all her grandeur and magnificence there was just one thing that troubled her greatly, and that was the very thing to which she owed all her present prosperity—the goose that laid the golden eggs. There never was such a noisy goose as that goose! Every time it laid one of its fine golden eggs it clucked and cackled so loudly that it could be heard all through the village. Every fresh egg it laid the more noise it made, until at last the old woman grew nearly frantic with the cackling and clattering that went on each day.

At length, one day, matters came to a climax. The goose seemed bent on letting the whole world know that she had just laid another golden egg. She cackled here and chuckled there, and clattered and cluttered and made such a dreadful din that the old woman felt that she could not bear the noise another minute. She seized a kettle which stood on the hob and hurled it at the noisy creature, and as that made no difference to the goose she flung the pan after the kettle; and then hurled pot after pot, and pan after pan, until there was nothing more within reach left to throw.

And still the goose went on cackling!

Then the old woman rose from her chair and began hunting round the room for things to throw at the goose. She seized the heavy brass candlesticks from the mantelshelf and flung them at the bird; she threw the books,

" 'Go catch the goose, and wring her neck!' she cried."

she threw the cushions, she threw the fire-irons, she threw her footstool, she threw her stick, she even seized the china dishes from the dresser and threw them.

But still the goose went on cackling!

Then the old woman stamped and screamed and shook her fist at the bird.

"Be quiet, will you! Be quiet, I say!" she shrieked, but the goose took not the slightest notice of her. It only cackled the louder, and still the more the old woman stormed the more the goose went on cackling.

Then the old woman was seized with a dreadful paroxysm of rage, and she shouted for her attendants.

"Go catch the goose and wring her neck!" she cried. "I will not be flouted so in my own house! I'll not bear that horrible noise any longer! Catch her, catch her! Wring her neck! At once, I tell you—at once, or I'll sack the lot of you!"

Then began such a bustling and scuffling as you never heard before in your whole life! Men ran this way, maids ran that. Dogs yelped and barked, and flew about from place to place. Cats were stepped upon, and dashed about, making terrible noises. Furniture was upset, people got in one another's way and knocked each other down; and the goose flew wildly from room to room, eluding them all, cluttering and cackling still, filling the whole house with her clamour. And the old woman raved and raged, commanding her servants to "Wring that wretched creature's neck this instant! This very instant—do you hear me!"

Suddenly, in the midst of all this uproar, the door flew open, and the stranger strode into the house. And as he entered the wind began to blow wild and rough, as it had blown on that morning, so long ago, when he had come before. He did not wait to ask if he might come in, but, pushing through the crowd, he caught the goose up on his arm, and cast a disdainful look at the old woman.

"So keep you cold or keep you warm, as best you may," he said scornfully. "It is a stormy morning." And then he was gone.

As he disappeared from sight the wind he had brought with him rose to a tempest. It shrieked and howled round the house as though it meant to tear it to pieces. The chimneys came tumbling down, the windows blew in, the doors blew out. The gale tore great holes in the wall; it swept away all the good things piled up on the larder shelves, the comfortable armchairs, and the soft cushions, and the fine furniture which the old woman had purchased with the golden eggs. It even seized the old woman herself, and blew off her cap and shawl, and tore her gown into rags and tatters. And as the frightened servants fled screaming out of the house it blew away the very carpets from the floor, and the curtains from the windows.

And when at last the storm died down, there sat the old woman in her tumbled-down cottage once more, clothed in miserable rags, all alone and wretched and shivering, as poor and old, and thin and hungry, as she had been when the stranger came to her door on that first wild winter's morning.

Valentine and Ursine

IT was St. Valentine's Day, and the King of France made up his mind to go hunting, for the sun shone warm and bright, and the grass was glowing fresh and green after the long winter's rain. So horses were bridled and saddled, and then, surrounded by his gallant peers and accompanied by his huntsmen, the King rode out to the fair forest of Artois.

Soon the cheerful shouts of the gay party were arousing the echoes amongst the hills and valleys. By woods and thickets rode the huntsmen, and the King and his courtiers followed after them. But all at once those in front came to a sudden pause, and when those behind hastened up to see what was the matter they saw a strange sight.

There upon the ground, in a little lonely dell, lay a new-born child. He was wrapped in a cloth of scarlet silk, and around him, pinned with a silver pin, was a golden mantle. No one was near him, and though the courtiers searched all around they could find no human being to whom he might belong. While they stood round the baby, wondering and perplexed, the King himself drew near to look at the child, and when the little one saw him he stretched out his tiny hands and smiled, which moved the heart of the King of France.

"Now, by the rood!" cried the King impetuously, "this child is passing fair. Doubtless he is of royal birth—perhaps the heir to some mighty prince. Go, some of you, and bear him home to my court, and look out some skilful woman to be nurse to him. He shall be brought up as my own son until such time as his own kindred come to claim him.

So the baby was carried home to the palace of the King of France. There he was given into the charge of a woman who was skilled in the care of children, who brought up the little one until he was old enough to come into other hands. The child was named Valentine, in honour of the Saint upon whose day he had been found; and as he grew older he won all hearts by his beauty and engaging manners. The King loved him as though he had been his own son, and when at last the boy grew to man's estate he dubbed him knight that he might win glory and honour amongst the peers of the realm.

Valentine was especially skilful at deeds of arms, and by the time he was grown up he had no peer amongst all the knights and courtiers of France. After he had been made knight he went to the King and begged a boon of him.

"Grant that the first adventure that befalls may be given to me, my liege?" he cried; and the King, well pleased at the knightly spirit of the lad, smiled at him kindly.

"The first adventure shall be yours," he said; and the young man was content.

Not many days after there came to the King's court three palmers, clad in dreary grey robes. They fell at the King's feet weeping and implored his help.

"We be come from the forest of Artois," they said.

" Deep within the forest glades there dwells a savage boy. He was bred amongst the wild beasts, and now he lives with them and feeds with them, and, like them, lusts for the blood of living men. He is so strong that none can withstand him, and many an innocent man has been cruelly done to death at his hands."

As the palmers finished speaking Valentine rose to his feet excitedly.

" The quest is mine, Sir King ! " he cried ; and the King looked at him proudly and fondly.

" Go forth and conquer," he answered ; and the brave young knight went forth to do battle against the savage man of the woods.

Mounted on a snow-white steed, and clad in shining silver armour such as became a virgin knight who had not yet proved his mettle, Valentine rode forth to the forest of Artois. Very soon he came upon the wild man, and then he saw that the palmers had told the truth about this young savage.

He was scarcely more than a boy, but yet his limbs were thick and strong, like those of a grown man, and the nails of his hands and feet were like great talons. His unkempt hair hung matted round his shoulders ; his eyes glowed with fury, like the eyes of an eagle. By his side lay a huge oaken bough, knotted and twisted, a terrible weapon indeed in the hands of a man as strong as he.

When the wild man saw Valentine in his shining armour riding towards him he sprang up with a howl that made the forest ring and leapt fiercely at the young knight's throat. But Valentine was ready, and with a skiful thrust of his spear he brought his assailant to his knees. One more such thrust would have laid the savage low, but the wild man sprang up again and, raising his club, aimed such a dreadful blow at the knight that, though Valentine managed to evade it himself, yet it broke his spear to splinters.

Valentine leapt down from his horse and, drawing his sword, sprang upon his enemy. The savage tried to wrest the blade from his hands, but the sharp steel made such dreadful wounds that, roaring with pain, he was obliged to let it go. Then he flung himself upon the knight and gripped him fast, and with a twist of his mighty arms laid him low upon the ground.

But Valentine was not dismayed, although for the time being his adversary seemed to have the advantage. He struggled and twisted until he had brought the savage to the ground beside him; and there the two lay, rolling and grappling, each endeavouring by every means in his power to overcome the other.

But brutal force and savage strength must yield at last to superior skill, and at length Sir Valentine prevailed over his enemy and won the well-fought field. He bound his conquered foe with a strong iron chain, and led him back to court to present him before the King.

But although he had conquered the savage, Sir Valentine treated his captive kindly. And as, at length, he grew used to the society of men, the wild man was wild no longer. He grew tame and docile, and learnt to love Sir Valentine, and in course of time became his most devoted servant and follower. Because he had been brought up with bears, his name was called Ursine, which comes from the Latin word Ursa, meaning a bear.

After this adventure Valentine lived in high renown at the French court. He daily grew more skilful at feats of arms, and his praise was in everyone's mouth. But one or two of the lesser knights became jealous of the young man, and one day, at a great feast made by the King, a young knight spoke slightingly and scornfully to Valentine of his birth.

"You were found in the forest, and no one knows who were your father and mother," he said. "Doubtless you are of base and lowly birth."

Valentine was very angry when he heard this unkind remark, and, turning to the knight who had made it, he swore a vow, then and there, never to rest until he had found his parents and proved the words to be untrue. And, bidding farewell to the King, he took his way out into the world, with his faithful servant Ursine at his side, determined never to return to the court until he could prove his parentage.

For many a long day the two youths wandered through the world, over hill and valley, through forest and through field. At length they came to a beautiful castle which was surrounded by a moated lake. The castle was built of marble and the battlements were gilded with gold, which made them shine and sparkle and glitter in the sun. A bridge of brass led over the moat to the castle gate, and boldly setting foot upon it, Valentine and his companion set out to ask admittance at the wonderful palace.

But beneath the bridge were hung a hundred bells, which whenever a man or beast set foot upon it were made to ring by some strange device. As Valentine and Ursine began to ride across the bridge the bells began to ring with such deafening noise that the two youths were almost bewildered. And at the sound of the bells the castle gate was flung open, and a huge giant rushed out upon them.

"Yield thee! Yield thee!" cried the monster, stalking towards them, "else will I stretch you dead upon the bridge for wolves to eat your flesh." But Valentine was nothing daunted at the size and fierceness of the giant.

"Vain boaster! I scorn thee and thy threats!" he cried proudly; and, setting his horse at a gallop, he aimed a thrust against the giant's side with such sureness of direction that the monster's blood gushed forth.

Mad with pain, the giant whirled his steel mace and aimed such a blow at the young knight that it must have killed him had it struck him. But, happily, it missed, and now the knight drew his sword, and before the giant could raise his mace again he was circling round and round him, hewing at the huge limbs with his sharp blade. Roaring with anger, the giant swung round and rushed at Valentine with such force that he bore both horse and rider to the ground. Then, with a horrible grin, the monster raised his club to deal a blow which would finish the work.

"Now breathe thy last!" he cried, raising the steel mace on high. But ere it could fall Ursine gave the giant such a blow with his oaken club that the huge creature tottered and sank to his knees. Ursine, quick to seize his advantage, aimed blow upon blow at the giant's head, and with one mighty groan the monster died.

Then Ursine turned his attention to his friend and master, and Valentine quickly revived under his skill and care. Then the two venturous youths repaired boldly to the castle to search it from wall to wall and set the giant's unhappy captives free.

They found the bones of many murdered knights within the dungeons, but there was no living man to be seen. The two youths began to think that the castle must be empty, but presently they came to a lonely cell somewhat apart from the others, within which they found an unhappy lady. She was very sad and mournful, and though her face was very sweet and had been very beautiful, it was marred with the traces of the tears which she had shed. Valentine lifted her in his arms and brought her out of the dark cell, and begged her gently to tell him her story. It was some time before the poor lady was recovered enough to speak, but when at last they made her understand that the giant was dead, and that she was freed from her captivity, she began to tell Sir Valentine her mournful tale.

"Alas, young knight," she said, weeping, "you see before you a wife who is husbandless, a mother who has lost her children. For twenty long years I have been imprisoned in that dreadful dungeon, longing for death, yet unable to die, forced to live and witness daily the unspeakable crimes committed by the monster whom you have slain. Know, then, that I am sister to a king. I was married in my early years to a mighty prince with whom I lived for one sweet twelvemonth in love and happiness. But some inhuman creature, jealous of our joy, came to my husband and made him believe ill of me. So cunningly were things contrived that the prince, my husband, believed me to be guilty of a terrible wrong. Filled with anger, he thrust me from him and sent me out into the world, bidding me never return to his kingdom upon pain of instant death. Attended only by one trusty knight, I set out with breaking heart to go back to my brother's country; but on the way I gave birth to two beautiful children, lovely boys, who, it seemed to me, would make amends for all my husband's lack of love and care.

"But alas and alas! As I lay alone in the great forest in which my children had been born—my trusty knight having gone forth in search of aid for me—a prowling bear seized one of my babes and bore him off into the wood. Wrapping my other son in my cloak, I rose to my feet, in spite of my weakness, and rushed after the creature; but, fainting on the way, I was unable to see which direction it took. For a long time I lay senseless on the ground, until at last my knight returned and brought me aid and help. But when we went back to the spot where I had left my other son, he too had disappeared, and neither of my pretty babes were ever seen again. We searched for them far and wide in the great forest, and while we were searching we met the dreadful giant whom you have just now slain, who killed my brave knight and carried me captive to his castle. He did me no harm, save that for twenty years he has kept me confined in the lonely cell in which you found me."

"Surely, surely," cried Valentine in great excitement, "you are the Lady Bellisance, sister of the King of France, and wife to the Grecian Emperor? I have been brought up in your royal brother's court, and often have I heard the story of your wrongs and woes. Your husband has long since discovered that you were innocent of the crime of which you were accused, and he has sought you sorrowing throughout the world. But none knew whither you had fled, and when the Emperor could find no trace of his much-wronged wife he vowed in grief to live a hermit's life within his court. Still does he mourn for you in deep affliction, and great will be his joy when he receives you safe and sound."

"Heaven is kind indeed!" cried the poor lady, shedding tears of joy. "Then I shall see my dear husband again, and in his arms perhaps find comfort for the grief of these past years. But, alas! nothing can bring me back my little sons."

"Madam," said Valentine, kneeling before her, "should you recognise the cloak in which you wrapped your babe, if you saw it again?" And taking from his shoulder the golden mantle in which he had been found, and which he had brought with him on his travels to aid in the discovery of his parents, he spread it out before the lady's eyes.

The lady gave a shriek at the sight of it and fainted away, but Valentine revived her with the tenderest love and care; and when she came to herself she found that he was indeed her son. She kissed him over and over again, then she looked at Ursine, who was standing beside his friend.

"Who is this youth?" she said earnestly. "He resembles you so closely that if I did not know that the bear had devoured my other son I should say that this were he."

Valentine turned to look at Ursine with a sudden thought.

"Madam," he said, "this youth was bred with bears and reared within their den in the forest of Artois. Do you remember any mark by which you might know him again if indeed this were he?"

"Yes," said the lady excitedly. "Upon his side was a little mark, something like a blood-red rose in shape. I recollect it well because of the curious resemblance."

"Ursine has such a mark upon his side!" cried Valentine. "Oh, Ursine, you are my brother! In one hour I have found my father and my mother—and my most dear companion is proved to be my brother!"

The lady clasped her new-found sons in her arms and kissed and embraced them again and again. When the happy family had recovered themselves a little they set out at once for the court of the King of France to bring him these joyful tidings. They reached the court without further adventures, and no words can paint the King's delight when his dear sister was restored to him, and when he found that Valentine, whom he had loved as his own son, was his nephew.

Messengers were dispatched with all speed to the Emperor of Greece, who, scarcely able to believe the happy tidings, came at once with great pomp to fetch home his beloved wife. For many long and happy years the lady and her lord lived together in their own country, and when at length they died, Ursine succeeded to their throne, and bore the sceptre long and well. Valentine stayed in France at his uncle's court, to whom in due course he succeeded, and reigned and ruled with equity and justice over the fair realm.

And thus ends the story of Valentine and Ursine.

The Jackdaw of Rheims

THE Cardinal Lord Archbishop of Rheims sat in state in the great convent hall, presiding over the feast which was being held there. Bishops and abbots and priors surrounded him, monks and friars, knights and great nobles attended by their squires, and many other persons of lesser degree. One and all they looked at the great Cardinal with awe and wonder and served him upon bended knee. Never before had been seen such a great and wonderful and awe-inspiring person as the Cardinal Lord Archbishop of Rheims!

Only one person in all that goodly company did not seem to be afraid of the Cardinal. And that was hardly a person, perhaps. It was a little sleek jackdaw, a great pet of the Cardinal's. The jackdaw alone seemed to have no awe of his illustrious master. He perched on the arm of the Cardinal's chair, peering up into the great man's face with a self-satisfied air, as though saying:

"We two are the greatest folk here to-day."

Certainly the little bird seemed to have no awe of anyone! He hopped all over the room, wherever he thought he would go, over the chairs and tables, over the cakes and comfits, over cowl and crosier, mitre and cope, rochet and pall, with a saucy air that struck terror into the hearts of the priests waiting with bated breath upon the Cardinal.

"The devil himself must be in that little jackdaw!" they whispered to one another.

Presently the feast came to an end. The long board was cleared, and six little singing boys in long white stoles came marching, two by two, through the grand refectory. One little boy held a golden ewer, engraved with the most beautiful designs, and filled with the purest water that flowed between Rheims and Namur. Another little boy held a golden hand-basin made to match. Two more little boys carried lavender water and eau-de-Cologne, while yet another carried a cake of soap which was worthy of washing the hands of the Pope himself. And one little boy more bore a fine white napkin, with a cardinal's hat marked upon it in red ink.

The Lord Cardinal turned round in his chair at the sight of these little white-clad boys. From his finger he drew his ring, the seal and sign of his office—a wonderful ring set with a turquoise more costly than any other stone in his lordship's possession. He put it down beside his plate, while the little boys came forward with due deference to wait upon His Eminence. Everybody was gazing at the sight of the great Lord Cardinal washing his hands; nobody had a thought to spare for the little jackdaw. The singing-boys were intent upon the proper performance of their duties—it would be a dreadful thing if they handed the soap or towel out of order, or presented the lavender water at the wrong moment. The monks and priests were watching the Cardinal's leisurely movements. Nobody was thinking about the ring, which lay unnoticed beside the Cardinal's plate. At least, not quite unnoticed! One sharp pair of eyes had spied it, and were glistening with delight at the sight of the great shining stone. And when nobody was thinking of such a dreadful thing happening, that little jackdaw marched off with the ring!

Nobody saw him come and nobody saw him go, but when presently the Cardinal, having dried his hands upon the soft white towel and scented them with due ceremony, turned to put on the ring he had taken off, there was a terrible commotion. The ring had gone, and nobody knew what in the world could have happened to it.

Everybody set to work to hunt for it, looking in every possible and impossible place. The friars were kneeling and hunting all along the floors and the walls. Dishes were lifted up, plates were examined, rugs were shaken, grates were poked and raked about—every monk in the building had his pockets turned inside out. The Cardinal drew off each of his plum-coloured slippers and peeped and felt about in the toes and heels, in case in some mysterious way the ring might have got inside one of them. But no—it was not there! The ring seemed to have disappeared completely; and the Abbot declared loudly that when nobody was looking some rascal must have popped in and stolen it.

The Cardinal rose in his chair and called solemnly for his bell and his candle and his book. Then in holy anger and pious grief he cursed in a good old-fashioned manner the thief who had stolen his ring.

It was a terrible curse:

He cursed him at board, he cursed him in bed;
From the sole of his foot to the crown of his head;
He cursed him in sleeping that every night
He should dream of the devil and wake in a fright;
He cursed him in eating, he cursed him in drinking;

He cursed him in coughing, in sneezing, in winking;
He cursed him in sitting, in standing, in lying;
He cursed him in walking, in riding, in flying;
He cursed him in living, he cursed him in dying!

Never was heard such a dreadful curse! But what astonished everybody was that no one seemed a penny the worse for it!

The day passed away, the night came on, and still the monks and priests were searching for the ring, when suddenly in the midst of the company came limping a poor little lame jackdaw. He was no longer saucy and gay. His feathers all seemed to be turned the wrong way about; his pinions drooped; he could hardly stand; his head had grown perfectly bald. So dim was his eye, so wasted were all his limbs, that, regardless of grammar, the whole assembly cried out excitedly:

"That's him!
That's the scamp who has done this scandalous thing!
That's the thief who has got my Lord Cardinal's ring!"

The poor little jackdaw hopped up to the Cardinal's feet, and gave a ghost of a caw, then turned round as though he would say:

"Please come with me," and, full of eagerness, the whole company arose to follow him. Very, very slowly he limped before them, and led them to the belfry door. And there, amidst the straw and sticks of the jackdaw's nest, the first thing they saw was the ring of the Cardinal!

The Cardinal called once more for his book, and then, in the presence of everyone, he took off that terrible curse. The piteous looks of the poor little bird were a sufficient confession of sorrow and penitence, and as he had done all he could to atone for his fault by restoring the ring, he was entitled to free absolution.

As the Cardinal pronounced the words which took off the curse the jackdaw was changed in a moment. Before the eyes of the astonished company he grew sleek and fat once more. A fresh crop of feathers came thick upon his head and body; he no longer limped painfully along, dragging his wings behind him, but perked up in an instant and became as strong and lively as ever he was before. Indeed, his tail wagged more than ever, if that were possible. But it wagged with a great difference. No longer was his air saucy and impudent; no longer did he perch cheekily upon the Cardinal's chair. Ever afterwards he hopped about with a devout gait, and attended matins and vespers more piously than any of the monks. Never again did he pilfer or steal, and if during prayer time anyone should slumber and happen to snore, the little jackdaw would sidle solemnly up to the offender and caw in a reproachful manner, as though saying:

"I'll let you off this time, but don't do it again!"

In fact he was the most pious jackdaw that anyone had ever seen or heard of.

For a long time he lived at Rheims, the pet and pride of the whole community, and when at last he died in the odour of sanctity he was mourned by everybody who had known him. And—

As words were too faint his merits to paint
The Conclave determined to make him a saint;
And on newly-made Saints and Popes, as you know,
It's the custom at Rome new names to bestow,
So they canonised him by the name of "Jim Crow"!

The Red Cross Knight

A KNIGHT was once speeding over a wide plain bound on a great and glorious quest. He was dressed from head to foot in silver armour. On his arm he bore a silver shield, and on the shield and on his breast he wore a red cross in memory of his dying Lord, to show to all the world that he would only fight in the cause of right and true holiness. And because of the scarlet cross which he wore on his shield and on his breast he was always known as the Red Cross Knight.

The Red Cross Knight belonged to the court of Queen Gloriana, the Queen of Fairyland, and it was at her command that he was riding forth on this adventure. By his side rode a lady who was very beautiful to look upon, but whose face was very sad and anxious. Her name was Una, and she was the daughter of a king and queen. Until a short time ago she had lived a happy, peaceful life, free from every pain and care, but a little while before a terrible dragon had come into her father's country, laying waste all the land and destroying all who tried to drive him away. The king and queen had been obliged to fly from their palace, and had taken refuge in a brazen tower, in which they were now held captive by the monster. But their daughter Una had managed to escape, and had ridden to the court of the Fairy Queen to implore aid for her father and mother. When she told her sad story in the Queen's court the Red Cross Knight had sprung forward and begged the Queen to give him the quest, and Queen Gloriana had granted his prayer and sent him forth with Una to do battle against the dragon.

So Una and the Red Cross Knight had ridden away together, attended only by a dwarf who had come with the princess. As they rode along they talked with one another, and soon the young knight fell deeply in love with the lady, who was as good and sweet as her face was beautiful. And Una learnt to return his love, for the Red Cross Knight was brave and manly and handsome, worthy to be loved even by a maiden as fair and good as she.

They had not ridden very far upon their journey when a great storm came on, and, seeing a thick wood close by, the travellers hurried towards it to take shelter from the rain. The trees in this wood grew so thickly together that not a drop of wet could pierce through their leaves, and as there were many pleasant paths and alleys, the knight and his companion wandered deep into the forest, thinking it a very delightful place. All around them birds were singing, and they almost forgot the storm and tempest without in the calm and peace within.

But after a while, when they wished to return in order to resume their journey, they found to their dismay that they could not find the path by which they came. To and fro they wandered, trying first one pathway, then another; but it seemed as if they would never make their way out of the labyrinth of tangled alleys. Soon they became quite confused and lost their bearings altogether, and, not knowing which turning to take next, they decided at last to follow the broadest and most trodden of the paths in the hope that it might lead them out of the wood. But it did not do so. Instead, it seemed to lead them ever deeper and deeper into the forest, until at last, in the very deepest and thickest part of all, they came upon the entrance to a cave, half hidden in the tangle of brambles and bushes.

The Red Cross Knight dismounted from his horse, and, sword in hand, advanced towards the cave, determined to see what might lurk within its dark shadows.

"Oh, beware, lest you walk heedless into danger," cried Una in alarm. "It would be better, Sir Knight, to pass on and leave this dangerous place. Some dreadful peril may be hidden in the darkness of that cave."

"Nay, lady," said the knight, "it would be disgrace for me if I turned back now for fear of a hidden danger. Surely you would not wish your champion to prove himself a coward?"

"Ah, but I know better than you the dangers you will meet within that cave! It is the den of the vile monster whom men call Error; and though I would not have you prove a coward, neither would I that you should step heedless into peril."

The dwarf, who was fearful and timid, drew back in terror as Una said these words.

"Fly, fly!" he cried. "This is no place for living men!" And he ran back some way into the wood, and would have been glad if his master and mistress had fled with him. But the young knight would not be stayed from this adventure, the first with which he had met since he had taken arms for the Fairy Queen. Grasping his sword in his hand, he entered the dark cavern, and by the aid of his shining armour, which lightened the gloom of the place, he saw a horrible monster lying coiled up in a corner of the den. In shape it was something like an enormous snake, and all around it lay a thousand little ones, as ugly and venomous-looking as their parent.

When the light from the Red Cross Knight's armour shone upon them, the young serpents fled to hide themselves; and the old snake tried to escape too, for she hated the light, and could only live in darkness. But the young knight was too quick for her. He sprang in front of her, and with his blade kept her from escaping, and then began a terrible fight. The monster, though she had tried to escape the battle, was brave enough now that she was cornered, and for a while it seemed as though she would overcome the Red Cross Knight, for she wrapped her long tail about him and held him so close that he could stir neither hand nor foot.

When Una saw this sight she cried out in terror.

"Oh, kill her, kill her, or she will surely kill you!"

At Una's cry, the Red Cross Knight made such a determined struggle for liberty that he succeeded in getting one hand free. Then he gripped the monster's throat with such force that for very pain she was obliged to release her hold of him. The conflict was fierce and long, but the young knight fought valiantly, and at last the monster, Error, lay dead upon the ground with her head severed from her body.

Then, full of joy, the Lady Una came near to welcome her champion.

"Fair knight," she cried; "born under a happy star, you have indeed fought well in this your first adventure! By killing this monster you have proved yourself worthy to bear arms on knightly quests. I pray that, wherever you go and whatever perils befall you, you may always fight as well and valiantly as you have fought to-day, and win as great success."

The young knight flushed with happiness at her words of praise, then, mounting his horse again, he and Una resumed their journey. This time they were successful in discovering a path out of the wood, and they went forward on their way, the knight looking eagerly for fresh adventures in which he might prove his valour and skill and earn fresh honour in his lady's eyes.

After they had ridden for some time they met an old man who appeared to be a hermit. He was dressed all in black; and with his bare feet, and his long grey beard, and his quiet, sad manner of walking, he seemed to be some holy man who had abandoned the world and had given himself up to prayers and penitence. He bowed humbly when he saw the knight and Una; and the Red Cross Knight, returning his salutation courteously, asked him whether he knew of any great adventure close at hand. But the old man shook his head.

"Alas! my dear son," he said. "How should an old hermit, living alone in a desolate cell hear of tidings of war and other worldly troubles? Although, indeed, if it be of danger merely you would know, I could tell you of a peril that does indeed lurk near by, though I am not sure that you would deem the adventure worthy for a knightly quest. Not far from here there dwells a wild man, who descends upon the countryside and lays waste all these fertile lands. If you would but rid the world of him you would be doing mankind a great service."

"Ah, that is just the sort of adventure I want to know about," cried the Red Cross Knight. "It is a disgrace to all true knighthood that such a creature should be allowed to live! Show me where he lives, good sir, and I will reward you well."

"He lives in the midst of a barren wilderness," answered the old man. "And no living creature may find him without much danger and difficulty, but if you like I will show you the way."

"Night is drawing on," said Una, interposing. "And I know, Sir Knight, that you are wearied with your fight against the serpent. Therefore, I counsel you to take rest now with the sun, and to-morrow, with new day, begin new work."

"Right well have you been advised, Sir Knight," said the old man. "Day, truly, is spent; therefore, come and spend the hours of darkness with me, and when the day breaks you shall take up your new adventure."

This proposal seemed good to the Red Cross Knight, and he and Una and the dwarf followed the hermit to his lodging—a little, lowly hermitage in a wood. Close by the hermits' cell stood a little chapel, and a stream of pure water flowed out from a sacred fountain. It was a pleasant, peaceful spot, where the travellers were glad to sit and rest; and they spent the evening talking to the old man in great contentment, never dreaming that evil could befall them in such a holy place.

Presently, when darkness fell, the hermit conducted his guests to the beds he had prepared for them. With gentle words of blessing he wished them good night; but when he had left them to their sleep and had gone back to his own cell, a sudden change came over his countenance. No longer did he seem the holy, good old man the travellers had thought him, but instead he appeared in his real guise, which was that of a terrible magician. For the old hermit was none other than Archimago, an enemy of Una's, and he had invited the two travellers to spend the night with him, meaning to do them some dreadful harm. He hated Una especially, for he had heard of her truth and goodness, and he always hated anyone who was good and true. He knew, however, that as long as Una and the Red Cross Knight were together he could not harm them, so he had made up his mind to separate them from one another.

Archimago had at his bidding a legion of evil spirits, who were always ready to obey his will. He now chose out two of these spirits, and one of them he sent on an errand to Morpheus, who ruled over the land of sleep, asking him to send by the spirit an evil dream which he could give to the Red Cross Knight—a dream which would seem to the knight to be real and true when he awoke in the morning. The other spirit he dressed up to resemble the Lady Una, and so well did he do this that at first sight it seemed impossible to tell the difference between the real Princess and the false one. Then, when the first spirit had returned with the dream, he dressed him up to look like a strange knight, and so, having laid his wicked plans, he began his work.

First of all he sent the wicked dream to the Red Cross Knight, and it seemed to the young knight that he saw his lady, the beautiful Una, whom he loved so dearly, do something that was very wicked and wrong. And then, while the knight was lying, tossing to and fro uneasily in sleep, troubled by the dream which seemed to him to be real, the old man came to him and woke him up.

"Alas! Sir Knight," cried the wicked magician. "Your fair lady is false to you! She loves not you, but another knight, whom she meets even now in the forest. She has lied to you all along, and has only enticed you hither to leave you now that her own knight has come. Come and see if I speak not true." And he led the young knight, still drowsy with sleep, to the place where he had left the false Una and the spirit he had dressed up to resemble a strange knight. And when the Red Cross Knight saw the two figures together he thought that all Archimago told him was true. Una did not really love him, he thought. She had found another knight to be her champion. And, filled with grief and anger and indignation and jealousy, he rushed out of the hermitage, and, calling to the dwarf to accompany him, he took his horse and his armour and left the place without even waiting to say good-bye to Una.

"She does not need me now; she has another knight," he said to himself; and full of anger at the manner in which he thought Una had treated him, he rode away as fast as he could. If he had only waited he would have seen that the hermit's story was not true, for had he gone closer he must have seen that the dressed-up figure was not Una at all. But he did not wait, and so began a time of trouble and unhappiness, both for himself and for the gentle maiden whom he had left alone and all unprotected in the hermit's cell.

When morning broke and Una awoke from her sleep and found that her two companions had fled in the night and left her all alone, she was filled with grief and dismay. She could not understand how the Red Cross Knight could have behaved in such an unknightly manner; but she felt sure that someone had been making mischief between them, and, mounting her own steed, she set out at once to try to overtake her champion and find out what it was that had made him behave so strangely.

But the knight had urged his horse on so fast that it was impossible for Una to overtake him. She was only mounted upon an ass, a beautiful beast, as white as snow in colour, but though sure-footed and faithful, it could not journey as fast as the young knight's charger. But though it seemed almost hopeless for Una to think of overtaking the knight, yet she would not give up her quest. She wandered on, seeking her companion over hill and dale, grieving to think that she had been so ruthlessly deserted by the knight whom she had learnt to love so dearly, and who had seemed so brave and honourable and true.

When Archimago saw Una riding after her knight, deserted and alone, he was filled with joy. Now at last, he thought, he would be able to take vengeance upon her for her truth and goodness. Una had never done the magician any harm, indeed she had never met him before, but Archimago could not bear to think that anyone in the world should be as sweet and pure and true as Una was, and he had determined to do her all the harm and evil that was in his power. He was able to disguise himself as he wished, and now he made himself appear like the Red Cross Knight. By the aid of his magic arts he clothed himself in a suit of silver armour, with a shield bearing a scarlet cross, exactly like the armour and the shield carried by the young knight, and when he was mounted upon a horse with his visor down, he looked so like Una's champion that even Una with her clear eyes could not have told them apart. Then, having satisfied himself that his disguise was complete, Archimago set off after Una.

Una, meanwhile, had wandered far away in the search for the Red Cross Knight. For many days and nights she rode on, but she found no trace of him, and at last she grew so lonely and unhappy and miserable that she was almost tempted to give up her search in despair.

One day, when she had been riding for a long time, she grew so tired that she dismounted from her ass and lay down on the grass to rest. She put aside the long veil she wore, and rested her head on her arm, and so beautiful did she look that it seemed as though her sweet face made sunshine in the shady place. Suddenly, as she rested, a fierce lion sprang out of the bushes beside her and rushed towards her as though he would have devoured her on the spot. But when he drew near and saw her wonderful beauty he suddenly became quite tame and mild. He crept up to her humbly, and licked her soft white hand and weary feet as though he knew how wronged and innocent she was.

When Una saw how the fierceness of the lion had turned to gentleness she began to cry a little for the first time since she had been deserted.

"The very beasts of the field have pity upon me," she said to herself. "But he who should have been beside me, comforting me in my affliction, has left me all alone."

The lion crept closer when he saw her tears, as though he would have comforted her if he could, and presently Una dried her eyes, and mounting her steed once more, set out again on her weary search. The lion would not leave her desolate, but walked still beside her, having seemingly made himself her companion, and her faithful guardian and guide.

Thus accompanied by the lion, Una came at last to a lonely hut where a blind woman lived with her daughter. They dwelt in great poverty and ignorance, and like many ignorant people they were very unjust and unkind. Una saw the daughter outside the hut with a pitcher of water on her shoulder, and she asked the girl if she would give her shelter for the night. But when the girl saw the lion she was frightened and rushed inside the hut, and barred the door against the traveller.

Una knocked at the door many times, begging them to open it and let her in, as she was faint and weary and would fain lie down and rest. She promised that the lion would not hurt them; but still the blind woman and her daughter held fast the door, until at last the lion, in rage at the treatment his dear lady was receiving, flung himself against it and burst it open.

The two foolish women fled shrieking into a corner, but Una soothed their fears with gentle words, and at last they grudgingly allowed her to lie down and rest. The lion lay down at her feet to guard her, but, for all that she was so tired, Una could not sleep. She lay thinking all the while of her lost knight, wondering where he was, and praying that no harm might befall him.

In the middle of the night a wicked man came to the hut and knocked at the door. He was a robber, and he was in the habit of bringing the things he stole to the blind woman and her daughter to take care of. On this night he came laden with a great bag of stolen goods and knocked at the door as he was used to do. But this time nobody answered his knock, for the two women were too much afraid of the lion to rise and let him in. He continued to knock loudly, and at last in a great rage he broke open the door and would have rushed into the hovel had not the lion sprung at his throat and killed him on the spot, for the faithful creature feared that he would do some harm to Una.

This naturally made the two women more frightened than ever, and they were glad when at last daylight came and Una and the lion went on their journey once more. Then they came out of their corner and wept and lamented over the body of the dead robber. They ran after Una, accusing her of being the cause of all their trouble, and crying out that they hoped that sorrow and unhappiness would speedily overtake her.

Una tried not to listen to their unkind words. Accompanied by her faithful lion, she kept steadfastly on her way, and after a while the two women turned back. As they neared their home again they met the wicked Archimago, disguised as the Red Cross Knight. He was seeking for Una, whom he had traced to this place, and he asked the two women if they had seen anything of her. Then the blind woman broke out into fresh railing against Una ; and the magician, understanding from her confused tale that Una was not far away, was filled with rejoicing. He pretended to sympathise with the friends of the dead robber, and he soon induced the blind woman to tell him which way Una had gone. Then he rode after her, thinking to himself that he would soon have the gentle maiden in his power.

It was not long before he overtook Una, but when he saw the lion by her side he was frightened and did not dare to draw any nearer. But Una had seen him, and, thinking that it was her own true knight, she rode towards him with a cry of joy.

"Ah, my dear lord!" she said. "Where have you been this long while? I feared that I had grievously displeased you, and I have sought you long and sorrowing."

"My dearest lady," said the pretended knight. "Never would I forsake you! How could you think such ill of me? I went but forth to seek adventure against the wicked man of whom the hermit told me. But now he will do no more harm; and now that I have found you, my dear fair lady, once more, I vow that never will I leave you again."

All the trouble and sorrow was lifted from Una's heart when she heard these words. So she had not been mistaken in her knight after all. The joy of the present moment made amends for all her grief, and she rode beside the pretended knight, feeling that the whole world had suddenly grown beautiful again.

Meanwhile, where was the real Red Cross Knight?

When he had left the Lady Una he had wandered far away, for now he had no quest before him, and there was nothing save his own will to direct his path. He was very unhappy to think that Una, who had seemed so true and pure and loving, should all the while have been false to him in her heart. As he rode along, his mind filled with angry, bitter thoughts, he saw coming towards him a knight and a lady. The knight was big and powerful, and clad in strong armour, while on his shield was written his name in bright, shining letters, "Sans Foy." This knight was a Saracen, and cared neither for God nor man. He was always ready to attack those brave knights who rode out to do battle against wrong and wickedness, for he counted all such as his enemies.

The lady who was riding with him was called Duessa. She, too, was careless and wicked. She practised magic arts, and by her sorceries had done much harm and mischief. She also hated all those who fought against evil, and when she saw the red cross on the young knight's shield she knew that he belonged to Queen Gloriana's court, and, turning to her companion, she urged him to overthrow the Christian knight. Nothing loath, the Saracen rode at the Red Cross Knight and attacked him with such fury that he almost overbore him at the onset.

But the Red Cross Knight was learning skill at arms. Quickly recovering himself, he drew his sword and attacked his enemy in his turn. Long and fierce was the battle, but, thanks to the charm of the Red Cross which he bore on his shield and breast, he was able to overcome his adversary, and, bearing Sans Foy from the saddle, he laid him dead upon the ground.

When Duessa saw that her champion was slain she did not stay to mourn over his body, but fled away in terror. The Red Cross Knight, telling the dwarf to bring with him the shield of the dead warrior in token of victory, hurried after her, and when he had caught her up, told her not to be frightened for he made no war on women.

"Tell me who you are," he said gently, "and who was the knight who was with you? I was sorry indeed to have to kill him, but it was he who attacked me, and his overthrow was but the fortune of battle. If you will tell me your name I will do all I can to relieve your distress."

The lady, who was a very good actress, burst into tears and told the young knight a wonderful tale. She said that discover you here some terrible evil may befall you also."

Since there was nothing which he could do to help the unfortunate captives, the Red Cross Knight turned to leave the fatal spot. But when he turned to his lady he found that she had fainted quite away. The young knight thought that it was in horror and pity of the story she had heard, but really it was fear that had made her faint. For she was Duessa, the wicked enchantress, and she was terribly afraid that the Red Cross Knight should discover her real name. The Red Cross Knight, however, never guessed at the real reason for her terror. He had no idea that she was Duessa, and, lifting the fainting lady in his arms, he fanned her and soothed her and did his best to bring her back to life. And when at last she opened her eyes he kissed her tenderly, begging her to have no fear since he was there to protect her. And when she was a little recovered he set her on her steed again, and led her gently away from that sad spot.

The two companions travelled on together, Duessa showing the knight the way. Presently they came in sight of a stately palace, all shining with gold and adorned with many lofty towers and glittering pinnacles. This beautiful building was the Palace of Pride, and for all it looked so fair it was really a house of great wickedness. It was built upon the frailest of foundations, so that at any moment it might have collapsed altogether, though nobody could have guessed this because it was so strong and beautiful to look at.

Duessa led the Red Cross Knight into this palace. She took him through the outer halls, where all sorts of people, rich and poor, were waiting in the hope of seeing

"They came in sight of a stately palace—the Palace of Pride."

the beautiful woman who was queen of this wonderful place. Right into the innermost hall of all she led him, and there on a gorgeous throne sat the Queen of Pride herself, dressed in the richest robes, all hung with costly jewels.

Duessa took the knight's hand and led him up to the Queen's footstool. Then, kneeling before her, she said that they had come to see her royal state and do her homage.

The proud Queen scarcely deigned to lift her eyes to look at the travellers, but she thanked them for their words, and then the lords and ladies standing around came up to bid the strangers welcome. They all knew Duessa, and greeted her warmly, and they were polite to the Red Cross Knight since he came with her. But the young knight thought that all the gold and glitter of the crowd was worthless and vain, and that a queen who showed no greater courtesy to a strange knight than this lady had shown was not deserving of the name of queen.

While the Red Cross Knight and Duessa were staying at the Palace of Pride a new arrival came to the Queen's court. On his shield his name was written in red letters, "Sans Joy." He was the brother of Sans Foy whom the Red Cross Knight had slain in combat, and when he saw the shield of the pagan knight, which the dwarf was carrying, he was filled with fury, and springing towards the dwarf he snatched it away.

The Red Cross Knight, however, was not going to let the shield which he had won in fair and open conflict be taken from him without a struggle. He attacked the new arrival with great vigour, and soon recovered possession of his trophy.

Sans Joy was prepared to fight fiercely to avenge the death of his brother and to regain the shield, and the Red Cross Knight was quite prepared to resist him; but here the Queen of the Palace of Pride intervened, and ordered them to cease their struggle.

"If either of you have a right to the shield you shall fight for it in open battle," she said, "not here. To-morrow you shall enter the lists against each other, and there decide which of you has the greater right to the trophy."

That night, while all in the palace slept, the false Duessa crept to the room where the pagan knight, Sans Joy, was resting. She told him of all that had happened to his brother, and made him promise to do his utmost to kill the Red Cross Knight.

"He has treated me very cruelly," she said, "and I would fain see his pride brought low. But, oh, Sans Joy, be careful! For he bears an enchanted shield against which none can stand. His armour, too, is enchanted because of the power of the scarlet cross he wears upon his breast, so that it seems wellnigh impossible for any mortal weapon to penetrate it."

"What care I for enchanted shields?" cried Sans Joy in scorn. "Am I not the strongest knight that ever carried arms? Fear not, lady, this knight of yours shall be overthrown, enchantment or no enchantment!"

Duessa was pleased when she heard these bold words.

"Fight and conquer, brave Sans Joy," she said. "And when you have won the victory over my enemy the shield shall be yours, and I, too, since I love you only second to the dead Sans Foy."

Then, having promised Sans Joy all the help of her magic powers should he be in need of her aid, she went back to her own room.

The next day the two knights came together into the lists where the battle was to be held. The Queen of Pride was there with all her attendants, and false Duessa too. Duessa pretended to the Red Cross Knight that she wanted him to win, but all the while she was hoping that he would be overthrown and killed by Sans Joy.

Soon the trumpets sounded, and the two knights rode fiercely at each other, meeting with such a clash of arms that both of them reeled back from the shock. Sans Joy was stout and strong, and his blows fell on his opponent like blows from an iron hammer. But the Red Cross Knight, though he was younger and slighter than his enemy, fought with equal fierceness and courage, and in his heart there burnt a great fire of love and purity. He was fighting for honour and for right, and the justice of his cause gave him a strength against his adversary which the latter did not possess. For Sans Joy fought only for vengeance and for base, unworthy motives.

For some time the two fought on, neither seeming to gain any advantage over the other. Then suddenly Sans Joy caught sight of his brother's shield, which the Queen had caused to be hung up in full view of everyone. And when Sans Joy saw the shield he was filled with redoubled fury, and, pressing forward, he dealt the Red Cross Knight such a terrible blow that the young warrior reeled backwards. He struggled hard to recover himself, but it seemed that he had been too badly hurt, and that he must now fall to the ground and be killed.

When Duessa saw this she sprang up and cried out joyfully:

"Oh, brave Sans Joy! Thine is the shield, and I and all!"

Her voice sounded in the ears of the Red Cross Knight. He could not hear the words she said because of the faintness that was threatening to overcome him; but he recognised her voice, and he thought that she was crying to him to renew the struggle. The thought seemed to give him sudden strength. He recovered himself instantly. With a tremendous effort he sprang forward and struck at his enemy with such a fierce blow that Sans Joy, taken quite by surprise, sank down on his knees, overcome.

With great dismay, Duessa saw that Sans Joy was about to meet with the same fate that had befallen his brother. Frantically she summoned her magic powers in order to save him. And just as the Red Cross Knight lifted his sword above his head, intending to bring it down with a mighty sweep that would vanquish Sans Joy for ever, she threw a mist of blackness and darkness over the fallen knight.

The Red Cross Knight stayed his blow in astonishment. His enemy had completely vanished, and though he called aloud to him and tried to pierce the veil that had descended between him and his foe he received no answer. And while he was still staring about him in amazement Duessa rose from her seat and came running towards him.

"Oh, bravest knight that ever lady chose to be her love," she cried aloud. "You have conquered! Th shield is yours, and I am yours also."

While the young knight still stood, dazed and wondering, the heralds came towards him, blowing their trumpets and hailing him as the victor. They led him to the Queen, and, kneeling before her, the Red Cross Knight offered her his service, which she accepted graciously. Although she had treated him with such scorn the day before, yet now that the young knight had proved himself so brave and skilful in battle, she was willing enough to accept him as a follower. Then all the company went back to the Palace of Pride, the Red Cross Knight riding in the place of honour beside the Queen, while all the people pressed around him, shouting and clapping their hands, and praising him for his skill and bravery.

When the procession reached the palace the knight was taken to his own chamber, and there his wounds were bathed and dressed, and he was laid on the softest and whitest of couches. Soft music played around his bed, and everything possible was done to soothe and cheer him.

While the Red Cross Knight was being so carefully tended by the Queen's servants Duessa stole from the palace and went to the place where she had left Sans Joy concealed by the enchanted cloud. He was grievously wounded and full of sorrow. Duessa hastened to the kingdom of the Queen of Night, who was a great friend of hers, and persuaded her to carry Sans Joy away to her own palace that he might be healed. Together the two women went to the spot where Sans Joy lay in a deep swoon. Lifting him gently, they laid him on the chariot of the Queen of Night and carried him to the underground world, where a wise man, who was very skilful in the use of herbs, promised to restore the pagan knight to life and strength. Then Duessa said good-bye to the Queen ot Night and went back to the Palace of Pride.

But when she arrived there she found that the Red Cross Knight had gone. While she had been away the knight's page, the dwarf who had once been Una's attendant, had discovered that in the palace there were deep and horrible dungeons full of miserable prisoners, knights and ladies of high degree, who had all fallen into the power of the Queen of Pride, and were now doomed to spend their days in dreary captivity. When he heard the dwarf's tale the knight made up his mind to leave this dreadful place. Duessa had disappeared, and he could not learn what had become of her, but afraid to stay any longer in such a house of wickedness, the young man rose up very early in the morning, and he and the dwarf stole away together. So it was that when Duessa returned she found that her knight had fled.

But Duessa did not mean to let the young knight escape her, and when she found that he was no longer in the palace she set out in search of him. It was not long before she overtook him, for the Red Cross Knight was not yet healed of his wounds, and he was soon wearied of riding. He had dismounted beside a cool fountain, and, taking off his armour, had sat down on the ground. He was tired and weary and sad of heart, partly at having parted from Duessa, but mostly because he thought Una had been untrue to him. For, in spite of all that had happened, it was Una, his first love, whom he really cared for the most. Here, as he rested in the shade of the trees that surrounded the fountain, Duessa found him, and, flinging herself on the grass beside him, she began to upbraid him and reproach him for leaving her.

The Red Cross Knight was very glad to see Duessa again, and he set to work to try to win her to a better frame of mind. The lady soon allowed herself to be coaxed into a better humour, and then she and the knight sat and talked pleasantly together while the summer hours sped on.

After a while the knight grew thirsty, and seeing the fresh water of the fountain trickling so temptingly by him, he stooped down to drink. But this water, for all it looked so pure and fresh, had the power of making anyone who drank it weak and feeble. Duessa knew this, but the young knight did not, and all unsuspecting he stooped down and drank his fill of the clear water.

At first he felt no harm, but presently a chill crept over him. He grew sick and faint, and his courage melted away. Still he lay on the grass and talked cheerfully to Duessa, for he thought that it was but momentary weakness and would soon pass away.

But it did not pass. And as the knight lay, all weak and feeble on the ground, a terrible noise was heard, and a wicked giant, named Orgoglio, came striding up. He hated all that was knightly and good, and when he saw the cross on the knight's armour he gave a furious roar that sounded like a clap of thunder and sprang upon the Red Cross Knight. And as the knight was unarmed, and feeble and faint from having drunken of the weakening fountain, he soon overpowered him, and would have killed him then and there had not Duessa interceded for him. Duessa did not wish to let the knight die yet. She wished to be revenged upon him for having killed Sans Foy and injured Sans Joy, and she thought that death at the giant's hands as he lay swooning on the ground was far too easy a way for him to die. She hurried forward and stretched out her hands to the giant, crying :

" Oh, great Orgoglio, spare him for my sake! Cast him into your deepest dungeon. Treat him as cruelly as you like so that he may suffer many pains before he die, and I will reward you with my hand."

The giant was only too pleased to agree to Duessa's proposal. He lifted up the body of the unconscious knight and carried him to his castle, where he flung him into a deep and horrible dungeon. Then he made Duessa his wife, and gave her rule over all his palace.

When the little dwarf saw his master fall he waited until the giant had gone, and then, creeping out from the place where he had hidden himself, he took up the silver armour, and the sword and the spear which had done such good service in the cause of right and justice, and laid them upon the back of the knight's horse. Then, sorrowing for the loss of his brave master, he set out to try to find Una and tell her his sad news.

Now let us turn back to Una and see how her fortune fared.

We left her riding beside the wicked Archimago, whom she believed to be her own true knight. The two had not ridden far when they saw another knight riding swiftly towards them. He looked very strong and powerful, and he was fully armed. On the shield which he carried was engraven his name, "Sans Loy." He was the brother of the two pagan knights, Sans Foy and Sans Joy, and he was seeking the Red Cross Knight in order to avenge their blood upon him.

When he saw Archimago disguised in the young knight's form his heart gave a leap of exultation. Here was his enemy at last, and, levelling his spear, he rode furiously at him without stopping to ask any questions. Archimago trembled with fear. He had never fought a battle in his life, and at the first attack he was easily borne from his horse and stretched helplessly upon the ground.

"Now will I take revenge for my brother's death!" cried Sans Loy, and, springing from his horse, he ran towards the fallen man, sword in hand, determined to slay him then and there, in spite of Una's piteous entreaties. He seized his enemy's helmet and drew it off, and then stopped still in astonishment, for instead of the Red Cross Knight, there lay Archimago.

"Why, Archimago," he cried, "what is this? I thought to slay my enemy, and now I find I have wounded my friend. How has this come to pass?"

But Archimago was too terrified to speak. He lay motionless on the ground, as though in a trance, and wasting no more time over him, Sans Loy turned to Una. He seized the veil which hung over her face and tore it away, and when he saw how fair and lovely she was his wicked heart was filled with joy.

"Now you are mine," he cried. "I have won you and I will keep you!" And he was about to throw his arms about her when the lion, who all this while had stayed faithfully beside his lady, sprang at him with a savage roar. The pagan knight turned to meet him, sword in hand, and after a short tussle, stretched the faithful beast dead upon the ground.

Poor Una wept bitterly when she saw that her dear lion was killed, but Sans Loy had no pity for her tears. Seizing her roughly in his arms, he set her on his horse, and springing up behind her, he rode away, paying not the slightest heed to her cries and piteous entreaties. Una's white ass followed behind them. He would not leave his mistress, yet was afraid to keep too close for fear of the wild lawless man who had captured her.

Una was now in a terrible plight, and there seemed to be no way of escape for her. Sans Loy rode on until they came to a dark forest, and then he stopped for a little while to give his horse rest. Una redoubled her cries for help, for it seemed to her that this would be the last chance she would have of rescue, though she had little hope of help coming to her now.

But help did come in a wonderful way. The forest was inhabited by a race of curious little creatures called satyrs. They were half goats and half men, and they lived a wild, free life amongst the woods. When they heard Una's cries they ran hastily to see what was the matter; and when they appeared Sans Loy, terrified at their strange shapes, forgot all about his captive, and, springing on to his horse, rode hastily away.

When the wood creatures saw Una's beautiful face, marred and stained though it was by the tears she had shed, they were amazed by her loveliness. Una shrank back from them, fearing that fresh danger awaited her, but the satyrs, savages though they were, were so touched by her beauty and helplessness that they did her no harm. They made her welcome and gave her food and drink, and Una lived in the forest with these kindly folk for some time. They treated her almost as though she had been a queen, and in the calm, peaceful life she led with them Una began to recover from her weariness and terror.

One day a knight came to the forest, named Sir Satyrane. He had been brought up by the satyrs since he was a baby, and they had taught him to be brave and fearless and strong. When he grew old enough he had gone out into the world in search of adventures like other brave knights; but always, when his quests were over, he came back to the forest to live for a little while amongst his old forest friends.

When he saw Una he fell deeply in love with the beautiful, gentle maiden, and he soon became fast friends with her. Una told him her story, and how she was still seeking for the Red Cross Knight. Sir Satyrane was very sad when he heard that Una loved another knight, but he was too noble and chivalrous to wish to keep her with him against her will. He promised to go with her and protect her until she found the Red Cross Knight again, and one day the two rode away together from the forest, Una mounted once more upon her white ass, which had followed her to the woods, and set out in search of the knight whom Una loved so dearly.

All day they travelled, and as evening approached they met an old man who appeared to be a pilgrim, for he was clothed in travel-stained dress, and he carried a staff in his hand on which he leaned heavily. Sir Satyrane and Una drew up their steeds when they came to him, and Una asked him eagerly if he had heard any news of a knight who bore upon his shield and breast the sign of a scarlet cross.

"Alas! my dear lady, I have," said the pilgrim. "But it is sad news, and will, I fear, give you much pain. I saw that knight this very day. He was fighting against a pagan knight. Dreadful it was to see them and to hear the clash of arms, and still more dreadful when I saw the pagan knight triumph over the Christian soldier. My heart bled for grief and sorrow when I saw the brave Red Cross Knight fall dead upon the ground."

Una, when she heard this dreadful news, fell from her steed in a faint. Sir Satyrane was almost as grieved as she was, and he did his best to restore her to consciousness. And when at last Una had recovered a little he turned to the pilgrim and asked him where the knight had gone who had slain the Red Cross Knight.

"He is not far away," said the old man. "I left him at that fountain, which you may see in the distance, washing the blood from his armour. Doubtless you will find him there if you do but hasten."

Sir Satyrane did not wait to hear more. Mounting his horse, he rode towards the fountain, determined to kill the man who had brought such grief to his dear lady. Una followed more slowly. She was so overwhelmed with the sorrow that had come to her when she heard that her dear knight was dead that she hardly cared what happened to her now.

But the old man, simple and guileless though he seemed to be, was really none other than Archimago, who, knowing by his magic powers where Una and Sir Satyrane were to be found, had assumed the disguise of the pilgrim and had come forth to meet them. What he had told them about the Red Cross Knight was quite untrue, though it was true that there was a knight resting by the fountain. And that knight was Sans Loy, whom Una had so much cause to fear and dread.

Sir Satyrane rode boldly up to Sans Loy and challenged him to fight, and soon the two were engaged in a fierce battle. Una came up while they were in the midst of the struggle; and when Sans Loy caught sight of her he suddenly left his adversary and rode towards her, full of delight at seeing her again. He meant to seize her and ride off with her, without troubling to finish his battle with Sir Satyrane.

But Satyrane rode after him and attacked him with such fury that in self-defence he was obliged to turn back and resume the fight. And while the two knights were still struggling fiercely together Una, who was half senseless with terror at the sight of Sans Loy, fled away. She was too frightened to stay and watch the end of the battle; and when Archimago saw her riding off he was delighted. This was just what he had hoped might happen, and, leaving Sir Satyrane and Sans Loy still fighting, he hurried after her.

In terror and despair Una urged her steed along, her heart wellnigh breaking with grief. Now that the Red Cross Knight was dead it seemed to her that there was no hope left in all the world. Her one thought was to get away somewhere where she might be safe from Sans Loy and give herself over to her sorrow and despair.

But as she fled along she met the little dwarf carrying his master's armour. Una was at first overcome at the sight of this armour, which seemed to her confirmation of the pilgrim's words, and she sank on the ground, sobbing piteously.

The dwarf was full of sorrow at having to tell her the sad news of the Red Cross Knight's defeat and imprisonment. He did his best to soothe his lady, and when she was a little calmer he told her the whole story from the time when Archimago had made the young knight believe that she was untrue to him until the moment when Orgoglio had come upon him in his weakness and made him prisoner.

Una's tender heart was pierced with sorrow to hear of her dear knight's peril and distress. But she was overjoyed to find that he was not dead after all, and that the pilgrim's tale was false. She saw through all Archimago's treachery now. She was filled with happiness to think that the Red Cross Knight still loved her, and that he had not after all been unworthy of his knightly quest. And when she had dried her tears she rose up and set out with the dwarf, determined to find the Red Cross Knight, alive or dead.

At last, after many weary days of travelling, Una met a noble knight, accompanied by his squire. This knight was the bravest and strongest of all the knights of the Fairy Queen. He was indeed none other than Prince Arthur himself. He was arrayed in the most beautiful armour, ornamented with precious stones, which shone and sparkled and glittered in the sunlight. His sword was of burnished steel, so keen and powerful that it could pierce any mortal armour, and its hilt was richly encrusted with gems. His helmet was of gold, and his shield was made of one huge diamond cut out of solid rock. So bright was this shield that the Prince would never show it to mortal eye, for it would instantly kill whoever looked upon it. He always kept it closely covered, except when he was fighting against some dreadful dragon or some other monster whom he could not subdue by the might of his arm alone. The dazzling light of this shield turned all who saw it into stone. Nothing that was not real and true could stand against it. Men were turned to stone, stones were turned to dust, and dust was turned to nothing at all.

When this wonderful knight saw Una, and perceived how sad and lovely she was, he drew rein and spoke to her.

And when he had heard of all that had befallen her he was filled with indignation, and he vowed to accompany Una to the castle of Giant Orgoglio and restore the Red Cross Knight to liberty if he were still alive.

"Fear not, lady!" he cried. "You have indeed cause to be sad and sorrowful, but take comfort. Until I have set your brave knight free I will never forsake you."

So, guided by the dwarf, Una and Prince Arthur set out for the castle of Giant Orgoglio. They soon reached it, and then, bidding Una wait for his return, the knight and his squire rode boldly up to the castle gates. The gates were shut fast, and nobody answered the Prince when he called for someone to come and open to him. At last the squire took up a bugle which hung by his side and raised it to his lips. This bugle had marvellous powers. Its sound could be heard for miles around, and no gate or door could stand fast against it. When the squire blew a piercing blast upon it every door and gate of the giant's castle flew open, while the walls were shaken to their foundations at the terrible noise.

Dismayed at the sound, Orgoglio came rushing forth to see who dared to brave his dreaded power. After him came Duessa, arrayed in her richest robes and riding upon a horrible dragon which the giant had given to her for a steed.

When the giant saw Prince Arthur he rushed out to kill him with uplifted club. But the prince sprang out of his way, and then, seizing his opportunity, attacked Orgoglio so fiercely that the giant was badly wounded at the outset and began to roar with pain. Duessa was dismayed when she saw that the giant was being worsted, and spurring on her dragon she hurried to his aid.

Then began a terrible conflict between the giant and Duessa, with her magic arts and her dragon on the one side, and Prince Arthur and his squire on the other. It seemed at one time as though the knight and his squire had no chance against such unequal odds, but at last Prince Arthur drew the cover off his shield and held it up before Orgoglio. With a scream the giant fell down before the blazing light of the shield, and the knight was easily able to kill him. The dragon surrendered at once when he saw the blazing shield, and Duessa, seeing that all was lost, threw away the golden crown she wore and would have made her escape had not the young squire run after her and brought her back to his royal master.

When Una saw that her champion had conquered she hastened towards him, praising him and thanking him again and again. Then the Prince, leaving Duessa and Una to the charge of his squire, went into the castle and began to search for the Red Cross Knight.

It seemed as though the castle was quite deserted, for not a single creature was to be seen. Prince Arthur called loudly, but no one answered his call, and though he went from room to room he found every one of them empty. At last, just as he was wondering what he should do next, he met an old, old man, the father of the dead giant and keeper of the castle. Prince Arthur asked him where all the people had gone, but the old man answered that he did not know. Then the Prince asked him where the Red Cross Knight was, but once again the old man replied that he could not tell. Then the Prince asked the way to the dungeons, but yet again the old man said he could not tell. And then, seeing that it was no use to question him any further, the Prince took the keys which the old man carried and searched the castle through and through.

And at last, lying in a horrible dungeon far from the light of day, feeble and wasted with sickness and starvation, the Prince found the Red Cross Knight. He was too feeble and ill to lift himself from the ground, for he had been lying for three months in the midst of the most horrible dirt and smells, with barely enough food to keep him alive. And never once during all that long time had one ray of light fallen upon his eyes. But the Prince took him tenderly in his arms and bore him out of the castle into the daylight again.

The knight was a piteous sight to look upon; he was so feeble and wasted and shrunken. Una ran towards him with a cry of joy, but she stopped aghast when she saw how weak and ill he was. Then her love and pity overwhelmed her, and kneeling down beside him as the Prince laid him gently down upon the ground, she wept over him, calling him by all the tender, loving words she could think of.

"What shall we do with this woman?" said the Prince, pointing to Duessa. "She it is, with the wicked Archimago, who has been the cause of all your woe. She is in your power to live or die."

"To let her die would be a dishonourable thing to do," said Una, "seeing that she is a woman. It would be shame to avenge oneself upon so weak an enemy. Strip her of her costly robes and let her go where she will. It is her scarlet gown alone that gives her the power to look so young and beautiful. Despoil her of her magic garment, and men will see her for the false, wicked woman that she is."

Prince Arthur did as Una told him. He took from

Duessa her rich scarlet gown, and when he had taken it off he saw that Una had spoken truly. It was the garment alone that had made Duessa appear beautiful. Now that she was dressed in it no longer, everyone could see how old and ugly and hateful the wicked woman really was.

Then they let her go, and Duessa, knowing that her power of doing evil was over, fled away into the desert. There she hid herself in caves and rocks, never more daring to show herself openly now that her shame and falsehood could be seen by all the world.

After this Una and the two knights rested in the giant's castle for some time, until at last the Red Cross Knight began to grow strong and well again. Then they parted company. Prince Arthur and his squire rode away in search of fresh adventures, while Una and the Red Cross Knight set out once more to fulfil the quest upon which they had ridden forth from the Fairy Queen's court so many months ago.

Una would not hurry on too quickly, nor would she let the Red Cross Knight be rash in undertaking new adventures, for he was still so weak and grew so soon wearied that she knew he would stand little chance against any strong foe. So they went forward by easy stages, resting often and talking happily together, for they had many things to say to each other now that they were at last together again.

One day, as they were journeying, they saw a knight galloping fast towards them. It seemed as though he were flying from some dreadful thing, for ever and anon as he rode he turned his head to glance behind him; and when he drew nearer they could see that his face was pale with terror. His head was bare, and round his neck hung a hempen rope.

The Red Cross Knight spurred forward to meet him.

"Sir Knight," he cried, "who has used you so, and from whom do you flee so fast? Never before have I seen a knight arrayed in such an unseemly manner."

The strange knight seemed too frightened to answer; but after the Red Cross Knight had spoken to him several times he recovered himself a little, and said in trembling tones:

"For God's sake do not stop me! He is coming after me!"

"Who is coming after you?" asked the Red Cross Knight.

The stranger did not answer, but made as though to ride on again. The Red Cross Knight put out his hand and caught his horse by the bridle, assuring the frightened man that no one was in sight.

"Am I really safe, then?" said the trembling rider, and when at last Una and the Red Cross Knight had succeeded in convincing him that no one was following him, he began to tell them his story.

"I was riding with a companion, a knight called Sir Terwin," he said. "He was a man skilful at all feats of arms and bold in battle; but in his love he was unfortunate, for he had given his heart to a lady who did not return his love. As we rode together we met a man who called himself Despair. He asked us why we seemed so sad, and when we had told him of Sir Terwin's sorrow he persuaded us that it was no use to go on living any longer, for there was nothing in the world that was worth living for. To my friend he gave a knife, to me this rope; and so well did he talk, and so persuasive was he that, God forgive us, we made up our minds to do as he desired and end our lives. Sir Terwin plunged the knife into his heart and fell down dead, but I, dismayed at the sight, suddenly realised what a terrible thing I was about to do, and, riding fast away, I fled from that dreadful man."

" How can idle speech persuade a man to take his own life? " asked the Red Cross Knight. Trusting in his own strength, with life stretching out so fair and beautiful before him now that he was restored to liberty and had his lady at his side, he was inclined to despise the weakness of the other man.

" Indeed it can do so," answered the stranger knight, " as I have woeful cause to know. I pray that you may never meet with that dreadful man, Despair."

" Truly," cried the Red Cross Knight, " I shall never rest until I have met with him, for it is not meet that the miscreant should be allowed to go on living to tempt brave knights with such guileful words. I pray you, Sir Knight, whoever you be, to ride with me to the place where you met with this wicked man that I may put an end to his evil life."

" My name is Trevisan," said the stranger. " I will ride back with you since you desire it, though sorely against my will. I will show you the cave in which Despair dwells, but, having once done that, I will not abide a moment longer. No—not for gold, nor any other thing that you can give me! I would rather die than meet him face to face again! "

So Trevisan turned back and went with Una and the Red Cross Knight to the cave where Despair lived. When they came in sight of the dismal place, a hollow cave underneath a dark and frowning cliff, Sir Trevisan would have ridden away again; but the Red Cross Knight spoke to him reassuringly, telling him that there was nothing to be frightened of, and at length he managed to persuade the knight to stay with him.

They entered the cave together. It was a dismal sight they saw when their eyes had grown used to the gloom of the place. There on the ground sat a miserable-looking man, clothed in dirt and rags, with long unkempt hair hanging about his gaunt and haggard face. He seemed utterly wretched and miserable; and at his feet lay the dead body of Sir Terwin, just as Sir Trevisan had said.

When he saw this miserable sight the Red Cross Knight was moved with indignation.

"Wretched man," he cried, "it is you who are the cause of this brave knight's death. Justice, therefore, demands that you should pay the price of his blood with your own."

"Who are you to speak so boldly?" asked Despair, lifting his haggard eyes to the young knight's face. "Does not justice teach that he should die who does not deserve to live? It was this man's conscience that drove him to his death, not I. And he was wretched and miserable upon earth, so why should he not die? Would you begrudge him rest in death who had so little rest or ease in life?"

The Red Cross Knight stood silent, half perplexed at these arguments, and Despair, seeing that he had gained a point, suddenly attacked the knight directly.

"Why should you wish to live yourself?" he said. "You have committed many sins already, and the longer you live the more will you commit. Is it worth while to go on living? Lie down and take your rest in death. You will be far happier than if you cling to life with all its ills. Think of the terrible imprisonment from which you have just been released. Who knows what horrible fate may not be in store for you—what trials and battles, sorrows and partings, griefs and imprisonments, all of which you will escape if you will but take my advice and die. And then Despair put before the knight daggers and spears and ropes and poisons, and all the instruments by which he might end his life if he wished to do so.

The Red Cross Knight stood in terrible doubt and perplexity. Surely it could not be right to take his own life? Yet Despair had made it seem that it was not right for him to go on living! The young knight was still weak and ill from his long imprisonment, and it appeared to his weary mind that perhaps Despair was right after all. It would be better to end his life now before he committed any further sin, and, taking up a dagger which Despair had put into his hand, he was just about to plunge it into his heart when Una saw what he was going to do.

With a cry of horror she sprang forward and snatched the dagger from his hand.

"Faint-hearted knight!" she cried reproachfully. "What is this that you would do? Is this the battle you have promised to fight against the dragon that lays waste my father's lands; is this to be the end of all your knightly quests? Come away! Come away at once from this deceitful man. What need have you to despair, who have been rescued from so many dangers to fight against the wrong and wickedness that is in the world! Arise, Sir Knight, and leave this dreadful place."

Then, full of shame at the dreadful deed he had contemplated doing, the knight arose and suffered Una to lead him away from the cave of Despair.

From this adventure Una saw that her knight was not yet sufficiently recovered from his sickness to wage war against the monster of evil that laid waste her father's lands. So she took him to a beautiful house not far off, where friends of her own lived. This house was called the House of Holiness. It was governed by a lady who was very wise and good, who had three lovely daughters whose names meant faith, hope and charity. Here Una and the Red Cross Knight rested for a while, and the three lovely daughters of the house tended and waited upon the knight and taught him all they could of faith and hope and love until he was healed in body and mind. Then he and Una said good-bye to the gracious lady and her daughters and left the House of Holiness, and once more set out upon their journey towards the kingdom of Una's father.

And now at last, after all their toil and wanderings, the Red Cross Knight came to the adventure upon which he had set out.

"See," cried Una. "Yonder is the brazen tower in which my dear parents are shut up. And yonder, too, is the dragon himself." And, looking in the direction in which she was pointing, the Red Cross Knight saw the most horrible monster he had come across yet.

The dragon lay stretched out on the side of the hill. When it saw the silver armour of the Red Cross Knight shining in the sunshine it roused itself and gave a terrible roar which made the ground shake for miles around. Then, slowly uncoiling its great length, it came towards him.

The Red Cross Knight told Una to go away to a little distance where she would be safe. And Una, knowing that he would not want to be hampered now by fears for her safety, obeyed him and rode to the top of a little hill close by, from which she might watch the battle without danger.

The dragon was indeed a dreadful-looking creature. His body was covered with glistening scales like a thick coat of armour. He had two great wings with which he could fly, and his tail was almost three furlongs in length, with two terrible stings at the end. His claws were sharp and strong, and out of his mouth came clouds of smoke and flames of fire. Many brave knights had fought against him and striven to overcome him, but he had vanquished every one; and now there were few who dared to fight him, so sure and certain seemed the death that awaited the man who challenged the monster to battle.

Spear in hand, the Red Cross Knight awaited the dragon's coming. The young knight was brave and steadfast in his determination to overthrow the monster or die in the attempt. Remembering the lessons he had learnt in the House of Holiness, he did not trust in his own strength, but in the might of the scarlet cross he bore upon his breast and shield which had brought him safely through so many great adventures. At the first rush the dragon bore him and his steed to the ground, but the knight was quickly on his feet again; and then, with shield and sword and spear, he fought long and bravely against the monster.

All day long they struggled together, but when at last night fell it seemed as though the dragon had gained the victory. The Red Cross Knight was driven from the field, and he seemed so worn and tired and exhausted that Una feared he would not be able to renew the conflict when daylight came again. But it happened that close by there ran a little stream which possessed the power of restoring to life and health any that bathed in it. The Red Cross Knight, driven backwards by the dragon's last fiery onslaught, stumbled and fell into this stream. All night long he lay there, half covered by the healing water; and when the night had gone and the sun rose up in the morning he rose up too, so fresh and strong and eager for the fray that the dragon was dismayed, thinking that it must be some new knight who had come to do battle against him.

Once more the battle raged, and this time it seemed as though the Red Cross Knight had gained greater strength and skill, for he wounded his enemy several times so severely that the dragon roared aloud in pain and wrath. But at last, in his fury, just as the day was ending, the monster poured out of his mouth a stream of smoke and fire and poison which so overcame the knight that he was obliged to retreat before his enemy.

He tottered away, reeling before the poisonous breath of the dragon, and unable to stand upright because of the wounds he had received and his great fatigue, he fell on the ground. But fortunately he fell under a tree from which oozed a little stream of healing balm; and as this balm touched the knight's wounds it healed them up and made him as strong and well again as ever he was.

The dragon dared not touch the knight while he lay in the shade of this wonderful tree, for no evil thing might come beneath its branches; so for another night the Red Cross Knight slept in safety, and when the morning came he was well enough to go out to meet the dragon once more. And this time the fight did not last long. For as the dragon came rushing towards the brave knight, with his mouth wide open to swallow him, the knight managed to inflict a fatal wound in the dragon's mouth, his one vulnerable spot.

With a roar that shook the earth for miles around and made even the knight tremble, the dragon fell down upon the ground. There he lay like a huge fallen mountain, dead at last. The Red Cross Knight had gained the victory; Una's enemy was defeated; the quest of the Fairy Queen had been performed.

All through these three terrible days Una had been watching the battle, not daring to stir from the little hill to which she had fled. Many and many a time had she trembled in terror for the safety of her brave champion, and all the while she had not ceased to pray that his arm might be strengthened and that he might gain the victory. And now her prayers were granted, for the dragon was dead, and her dear knight was safe and all unharmed.

Full of joy, Una ran towards him, praising God for the victory and thanking the Red Cross Knight again and again for all that he had done. And as she clung to him, scarcely daring to believe that all her sorrows were over, a sound of joyful trumpets heralded the approach of the king and queen, her father and mother. The watchman on the brazen tower had seen the fall of the dragon and had run in haste to tell the king and queen of their deliverance; and now they had come forth from their prison to greet their deliverer, and to rejoice over the return of their dearly loved child.

The Red Cross Knight was brought in great triumph to the palace, and great feasts and rejoicings took place because of the death of the dragon, and because the

Princess Una was to be betrothed to the knight who had fought so bravely for her sake. They could not be married as yet, for the Red Cross Knight had vowed to serve the Fairy Queen for six years as a maiden knight; and until those years were over and his vow fulfilled he might not take a wife. But there was nothing to hinder their betrothal, and one day the king made a great and solemn feast, and Una, dressed in purest white, was brought into the great hall of the palace to be affianced to the Red Cross Knight.

Just before the betrothal took place Duessa and Archimago made one last effort to injure the two whom they so hated. A messenger came running in great haste to the king where he sat on his throne, and handed him a letter. The letter said that Fidessa, the daughter of the great Emperor of the West, bade the king beware how he betrothed his fair daughter to the young knight who had killed the dragon, for the knight was already married to Fidessa herself.

The king's face grew very grave as he read this letter. He called the Red Cross Knight to his side and asked him if this were true. The Red Cross Knight was ashamed to tell how he had allowed himself to be deceived by Duessa, but yet he scorned to hide his shame, and standing up boldly and bravely in front of all, he told his story frankly.

Una looked hard at the messenger as the knight was speaking, and her pure eyes were able to pierce his disguise.

"It is Archimago, himself, the cause of so much of our trouble," she cried. "Uncloak him, and see if I speak not true!"

When he heard these words the messenger turned to fly, but the king's guards were too quick for him. They seized him and stripped his disguise from him; and when he stood up unconcealed before them all they saw that it was indeed the wicked Archimago.

The king was very angry at the way the magician had tried to injure the brave young knight, and he commanded that the wicked old man should be chained and cast into a deep dungeon, so that he might not escape to do more evil in the world; and in spite of his struggles Archimago was carried away and cast into prison.

Then the Red Cross Knight was betrothed to Una, and for a while he rested at the king's palace, happy in the presence of his dear lady. But such joy could not last for ever. He was young and strong, and he had his vow to fulfil, and both he and Una knew that no lasting happiness could come from neglect of duty. And so at last the day came when the lovers had to say good-bye—the Red Cross Knight to ride back to the court of Queen Gloriana to seek more knightly quests, Una to remain in her father's palace, to pray for the safe return of her beloved knight.

But though the six years might seem long to the lovers, yet they knew that the time would pass at length. Patience and constancy would be at last rewarded, and the Red Cross Knight, with fresh honour and glory added to the lustre of his name, would come riding back one day to claim his lady's hand in marriage. And then they would live together in happiness all through the rest of their earthly lives.

Lord Ullin's Daughter

IT was a wild, stormy evening in the Highlands of Scotland. On the shore of Lochgyle a Highland chieftain, with a lady on his arm, was speaking urgently to a sturdy boatman, who stood gazing at the raging waters of the loch with a doubtful frown on his brow.

"I'll give you a silver pound if ye will but row us o'er the ferry," cried the chieftain impatiently. "Only do not tarry. We must cross the water instantly—instantly, I tell you!"

The boatman turned a suspicious face towards his would-be passengers.

"Now who be ye would cross Lochgyle this night?" he asked distrustfully. But the Highland lord was too anxious and impatient to be safe over the ferry to heed the suspicion in his tone.

"I am the chief of Ulva's Isle, and this is Lord Ullin's daughter," he answered. Then, seeing that the boatman still hesitated, he determined to tell him everything and throw himself upon the man's mercy. "For three days have we fled before her father's men. His horsemen ride hard behind us—should they discover us, my blood would stain the heather. Then who would cheer my bonny bride?" he added tenderly, looking down at the muffled figure that clung to his arm.

Lord Ullin was well known through all the countryside. He was a stern, hard man, and he bore a hatred that almost amounted to madness against the Chief of Ulva for daring to aspire to the hand of his daughter. He had sworn that his child should never marry the Highland chief, and when, under cover of darkness, she had slipped out of the castle three days before, his rage and fury knew no bounds. Calling his horsemen together, he put himself at the head of them, announcing his determination of scouring the country until he had overtaken the runaway pair and slain the lord of Ulva.

The fisherman was touched at the plight of the young couple. He spoke with a sudden impulsiveness quite different from his former suspicious manner.

" I'll go, my chief; I'm ready," he said. " I would not brave the dangers of the loch this night for all the silver you could offer me; but for the sake of your winsome lady I will e'en row you over the ferry, though I misdoubt me no sane man would put to sea in such a storm as this."

As he spoke he began to carry the oars to the boat, and with the chieftain's help he pushed the small craft down to the edge of the shore.

By this time the storm had increased until there was a veritable tempest raging. It had grown so dark that they could scarcely see each other's faces, and the waves dashed on the shore with a noise that almost deafened them. But as the boatman busied himself with the preparations for the voyage the two who were waiting could hear above the roaring of the wind and the raging of the water a sound of trampling in the glen behind them. The lady shivered with fear as she heard it.

" Oh, haste, haste! " she cried imploringly. " It is my father! I would rather face the raging of the skies than have his vengeance overtake us now!"

For all answer the boatman pushed the little craft into the water, and the chieftain took his bride in his arms and sprang aboard with her. The man pushed off, and then springing into the boat, he set himself to the task of steering the little storm-tossed craft across the waters of the loch.

They had scarcely got out of reach of the shore when the tempest descended upon them with redoubled fury. Bravely the sturdy Highlander bent to his oars, but in spite of all his efforts he could make no headway. Wave after wave dashed over them, drenching them with spray, until one, mightier than all the others, lifted up the little boat as though it had been a cockleshell and capsized it on the instant.

When Lord Ullin reached that fatal shore all his wrath was changed to wailing and dismay, for he saw the boat containing his daughter overwhelmed in the rush of waters.

He stretched out his hands in impotent distress.

"Come back, come back!" he cried in grief. "I'll forgive your lover—I will forgive everything, only come back, come back! My daughter, oh, my daughter!"

But his grief was all in vain. The wild waves lashed the shore, preventing return or aid; the little boat was swept beneath the waves, and Lord Ullin, helpless in his anguish, saw his child disappear below the dark waters of the loch, clasped in her lover's arms.

It was a dreadful punishment to the father for his hardness and cruelty to his only child. Much as he disliked him, he would rather have seen her married to the

Chieftain of Ulva than drowned before his very eyes. But it was too late to tell her so.

And in the Highlands of Scotland the story is still told of that fatal night on the shore of Lochgyle—and of how Lord Ullin, who had left his home swearing to have the blood of the man who had taken his daughter, returned to it in heartbroken grief, bowed down with remorse and sorrow.

The Friar of Orders Grey

A FRIAR of Orders Grey was once walking along the high road telling his beads. He had had a very sad life, and now, although he was still young, he had determined to enter a monastery and devote his life to good works, since the world held no further joy for him. He had not yet completed his year of probation; but he had made up his mind that once that was past he would take the vows of the Order and pass into the cloister for ever.

It was a wet, dreary day. The rain fell in a cold drizzle, and the wind blew keenly through the hawthorn trees. It was hardly the day for travellers to be abroad; but as he walked along the wet road the young Friar saw a pilgrim coming towards him. As he drew nearer he saw that the traveller was a lady, young and beautiful. She was dressed in the mournful weeds worn by those who go on pilgrimages, and in her hand she carried the heavy pilgrim's staff. The young Friar's heart gave a sudden leap as he caught sight of her face. He had seen this lady before. Indeed, it was for her sake that he had determined to leave the world and enter the cloister.

When the traveller saw the Friar of Orders Grey she paused and rested on her staff.

"Christ save thee, reverend Friar," she said in salutation as the young man drew near. "I pray you have pity upon a weary pilgrim and tell me if my true love has ever worshipped at yonder holy shrine of yours?"

"Nay, lady," said the Friar, endeavouring to disguise his voice, for he did not wish the lady to recognise him yet. "Nay, how should I know your true love from all the other men who have knelt and worshipped at the shrine?"

"Oh, you may know him by his staff and his sandals and his pilgrim's dress, and also by his face and mien. He has such blue eyes you could scarce fail to remark them, and his hair is flaxen in its fairness," said the lady earnestly. "Indeed, Sir Friar, you could not mistake my love, for he is the handsomest man you would see in many a day."

The Friar drew his hood more closely about his face.

"Lady," he said gently, "I have seen him, but he is dead and gone. Within yonder holy cloister he languished long, lamenting always of a fair lady who had treated him cruelly; and in spite of all we could do for him he died at last. He is buried within our churchyard wall. Six young men bore him to his grave, and many a tear bedewed the green turf which we laid over his body."

The lady gave a cry of grief and buried her face in her hands.

"Oh, art thou dead, gentle youth? And hast thou died for me?" she cried in anguish. "Oh, cruel that I was to treat thee so proudly and coldly! When I had sent him away I learnt at last how much I loved him, and I set forth upon this pilgrimage to find him and beg him to forgive me. But now it is too late—too late!" And she burst into a storm of bitter weeping.

"Weep not, lady, weep not!" said the Friar reprovingly. "Sorrow and tears are all in vain. You must seek for comfort from above and not give way to this useless grief."

"Ah, do not reprove my sorrow," sobbed the lady. "I have lost the sweetest youth that ever won lady's love; and shall I not weep and lament, when it was my own cruelness that drove him to his death? Oh, my lover! For your loss I will evermore sigh and weep. I only wished to live for you before—now I only wish to die for you."

The Friar spoke again, still in the same reproving tone:

"Weep no more, lady, weep no more,
  Thy sorrow is in vain:
For violets plucked the sweetest shower
  Will ne'er make grow again.

"Our joys as wingèd dreams do fly,
  Why then should sorrow last?
Since grief but aggravates thy loss
  Grieve not for what is past."

"Ah, say not so, holy Friar," said the lady. "Since my true love died for me, surely it is meet that my tears should flow for him? Oh, will he never come again? Ah, no, he is dead and laid in his grave—woe is mine for ever!"

Still the Friar endeavoured to console her.

"Sigh no more, lady, sigh no more,
  Men were deceivers ever:
One foot on sea and one on shore,
  To one thing constant never.

"Hadst thou been fond, he had been false,
And left thee sad and heavy;
For men were ever fickle found,
Since summer trees were leafy."

"No, no!" the lady cried passionately. "My love had the truest heart that ever lady could wish for. Never would he have been false to me! And now he is dead. Farewell, farewell, thou much-loved youth! Since thou hast died for me I'll leave my home and be for ever a pilgrim upon earth. But first show me my true love's grave that I may lay my weary limbs upon it, and kiss the green turf that wraps his body."

The Friar put out his hand to detain her.

"Stay, fair lady, stay and rest awhile beneath this cloister wall," he said persuasively. "See how the drizzly rain is falling, and feel how cold the wind blows through these hawthorn trees. Stay awhile and rest until the weather is fairer."

"No rain that falls on me can wash my fault away," the lady said. "Stay me not, I pray."

"Yet stay, fair lady," said the Friar again, and then, unable to contain himself any longer he flung back his concealing hood.

"Dry those tears," he cried tenderly. "See, it is I—thine own true love, concealed beneath this gown of grey. Forced by my grief, I sought refuge within these holy walls, thinking to end my days in prayer and fasting. But—thanks be to God—my year of grace is not yet over. I may still return to the world if I wish it. And, oh, could I but hope to win thy love, how joyfully would I cast away these weeds!"

Overcome with joy and amazement, the lady could not speak at first. But when she saw that it was indeed her own true love who stood before her she held out her arms to him with a cry of rapture and relief.

"Now farewell, grief, and welcome, joy!" she said as she found herself clasped in the young man's arms. "I have found thee again, my own true love. Never more will we be parted until death comes to claim us for his own."

The History of John Gilpin

JOHN GILPIN was a citizen of famous London town. He was a linendraper of Cheapside, and was very well known and respected amongst the inhabitants of the neighbourhood. Besides being a linendraper, he was also a Captain in the Volunteers, the trained bands, as they were called in those days; and the good gentleman thought himself a very important person indeed.

John Gilpin had a wife who took almost as much pride in her worthy husband as John Gilpin did himself. She was industrious and capable and thrifty, and was not for ever wishing to be out and about, as some frivolous ladies in the neighbourhood were always wanting to do. Indeed, although the Gilpins had been married for nearly twenty years, they had never yet had a holiday; and at last it seemed to Mistress Gilpin that the time had really come to take one.

It was on the day before the twentieth anniversary of their wedding that Mistress Gilpin came to her husband with her proposal.

" My dear," she said, " although we have been wedded these twice ten tedious years, we have never yet seen a holiday. Now to-morrow is our wedding-day, and I propose, as a little outing to celebrate the occasion, that we should repair to the Bell at Edmonton in a chaise and pair. I hear that they give a very good dinner at the

Bell. We'll invite my sister and my sister's child to go with us, and that with myself and our three children will just fill the chaise, so you must hire a horse and ride on horseback after us."

John Gilpin was a sensible man, and he always fell in with his wife's proposals when they were at all practicable. Besides, he too was very much attracted by the prospect of a holiday, and he replied at once to her suggestion.

"My dearest dear," he said gallantly, "of all womenkind I do admire but one, and as you are she your commands shall be instantly obeyed. We'll have the chaise and pair and drive out to the Bell at Edmonton, and as for a steed for me—why, I am sure our good friend the calender will lend me his horse, and that will save us the expense of hiring one."

"That's well said," answered Mistress Gilpin approvingly. "And since wine is so dear we'll take our own with us. It's bright and clear, and I'm sure it's just as good as any we should get at the Bell."

John Gilpin kissed his wife affectionately. He was overjoyed to find that even when bent on pleasure she still kept her frugal mind.

The morning came, and with it the chaise and pair, but Mistress Gilpin would not allow it to be driven up to the door of her house for fear her neighbours should accuse her of pride in her fine carriage. So the driver was told to stay his horses three doors off, and there Mistress Gilpin and her three children, Mistress Gilpin's sister, and Mistress Gilpin's sister's child got in, all prepared for adventure and brimming over with excitement at the pleasure in store.

Smack went the whip, round went the wheels, and the chaise went rattling away over the stones of Cheapside. John Gilpin, standing at his horse's side, seized fast its flowing mane and mounted in haste to ride after them; but he soon came down again, for just as he reached the saddle he turned his head and saw three customers enter his shop. So down he came in a great hurry, for though he was grieved at the loss of time, yet he knew full well that the loss of pence would trouble him much more. The thought of those three customers would weigh on his mind all day and quite spoil his pleasure if he did not attend to them.

" If others come after I'm gone," he thought to himself, " it can't be helped, and as I shall not see them it will not trouble me. But since I'm still here it would be grievous sin to let good custom go by." And he hurried into the shop after the customers, hoping fervently that they would not be long about their business.

But it was some time before all three of them were suited to their mind, and John Gilpin grew very impatient before at last they left the shop and set him free to start on his journey. He was just about to mount once more when Betty, the Gilpins' maidservant, came flying out of the house in a great state of mind.

" Oh, sir, the wine is left behind," she panted breathlessly.

Gilpin gave an exclamation of dismay.

" Good lack! " he said; then, as he thought how distressed his wife would be at her carelessness, and how much the landlord of the Bell would charge if they bought a bottle of wine there, he turned to Betty with an air of determination.

"Bring it here to me," he said, "and likewise the stout leathern belt I wear when I do exercise."

Mistress Gilpin had found two stone bottles in which to put the wine. Each bottle had a curling ear, and when Betty returned with her master's belt Gilpin drew it carefully through the ears of the bottles and then buckled it round his waist, adjusting it skilfully with a bottle at each side in order to make the weight even. Then, lest his neighbours should see the bottles and be shocked to see him carrying them, he threw a long red cloak, well-brushed and neat, over his shoulders, which quite hid the bottles of wine. Then once more he mounted his steed, and urged his horse slowly over the cobbled street, riding very carefully and cautiously.

When they had passed out of Cheapside the cobblestones ended, and finding a smoother road beneath his well-shod feet, the horse began to trot, a manner of proceeding which John did not like at all.

"Fair and softly! Fair and softly!" cried the good man. But he cried in vain! The trot became a gallop soon in spite of rein and curb, and all the coaxing and persuasive words that Gilpin could think of. The road was smooth and the day was fine, and the horse was fresh and very tired of waiting about for Gilpin's customers, and he didn't see in the least why he should be required to go at a funeral pace when everything was so favourable for a good gallop.

And now poor John was in a grievous state of mind. To tell the truth he was not much of a horseman—in fact, I doubt if he had ever been upon a horse's back before. Riding was not quite such an easy business as he had imagined it would be, and it seemed to the poor little stout man as though his very last hour had come. Stooping down, as he needs must who cannot sit upright, he grasped his horse's mane with both his hands, and clung on with all his strength and might.

His horse, who had never in his life been handled in such a strange manner, wondered more and more whatever sort of thing he had got upon his back. He was nearly as frightened as his rider by this time, and when he felt his mane grasped so tightly and painfully he gave a great snort and began to run away in good earnest, which absolutely terrified poor John Gilpin. He had been frightened enough before, but words would not describe his feelings now.

Away went Gilpin's horse, and away went Gilpin on his back, through the streets of London town! The wind caught his red cloak and blew it out behind him, like a streamer long and gay. Away flew his hat, away flew his wig, and at last, loop and button both failing, the cloak flew away too. And then everyone could see the heavy stone bottles dangling at his waist, and the people in the streets cried out as he flew past:

"He carries weight! He rides a race! 'Tis for a thousand pounds!" And they rushed along after the rider, shouting and cheering him on. Never before, surely, in the streets of London town had there been such an excitement over a little fat man on a horse! Dogs barked, children screamed, up flew all the windows, ladies waved their pocket-handkerchiefs, and everybody called out as loudly as they could: "Well done! Well done!" thinking that Gilpin was riding some famous race. The turnpike men never troubled about their fees. They, too, thought that Gilpin rode a race, and as fast

" Away went Gilpin's horse, and away went Gilpin on his back, through the streets of London town."

as he drew near they flung their gates wide open to let the daring rider through.

And now, as poor Gilpin went galloping on, his head bowed low on his horse's neck, clinging with all his might to the runaway's mane, the bottles, swinging backwards and forwards behind his back, suddenly struck one another and were shattered to bits. The wine went pouring down the horse's sides into the road; but still Gilpin seemed to carry weight, for the bottle-necks could still be seen dangling from his waist, and still the people shouted and cheered and flew to get out of the way, when all the while poor John Gilpin would have been thankful to anybody who would have stopped his runaway steed, and thus have brought his mad career to an end.

He was out of London now, and riding through the little village of Islington, causing such excitement as the little place had never known before. On and on flew Gilpin's horse, and on and on flew Gilpin, until they came to the Wash at Edmonton. The river ran across the road here, but little cared Gilpin's horse for that! He dashed through the river, still at the same mad pace, throwing the water about on both sides of him like a trundling mop or a wild goose at play.

Meanwhile the party in the chaise and pair had arrived at the "Bell Inn," and, having ordered a good dinner, they repaired to the balcony to watch for John Gilpin. And when presently they saw him fly past in this mad manner, all wet and draggled from his passage through the river, and splashed and spattered from top to toe, they were dreadfully surprised and alarmed, and poor Mistress Gilpin grew very agitated and disturbed. She rose to her feet and leaned over the balcony railing.

"Stop, stop, John Gilpin, here's the house!" she cried. "The dinner waits, and we are all so tired and hungry!"

"So am I," said poor Gilpin; but for all his efforts he was unable to draw rein. His horse was not at all inclined to tarry there. His owner had a house at Ware, a little village a good ten miles away, and on he flew, and on flew Gilpin with him, until at last, to Gilpin's great relief, they reached the house of the calender, and the runaway horse stood still.

The calender saw his friend arriving, and amazed to see him in such a terrible state, he laid down his pipe and ran to the gate and accosted him excitedly.

"What news? What news?" he cried. "Tell me your tidings at once! Why have you come bareheaded like this? Why, indeed, have you come at all?"

Now Gilpin was a merry little man, and he loved a timely joke, and although he was so out of breath, and so tired and so dishevelled and so hungry, he could not resist the opportunity of making one.

"I came because your horse *would* come," he said. "As for my hat and wig, doubtless they'll soon be here—they are upon the road!" And he chuckled delightedly at his own wit.

The calender was glad to find that nothing much was amiss, and that, in spite of his ruffled state, his little friend was in his usual cheerful frame of mind; and he went into the house and reappeared with a hat and wig, which he held out to Gilpin.

"My head is twice as big as yours," he said laughingly, "therefore they needs must fit. But come along in and wash away some of your dust and dirt, and stop and eat with me, for you must be in a very hungry case, I should think."

But Gilpin shook his head.

"'Tis my wedding-day," he said. "Just think what the world would say if my wife were to dine at Edmonton while I dined at Ware! No, no, thank you all the same, but I must get back again," and, taking up the reins, he said to the horse, "you came here for your own pleasure—now you shall go back for mine."

Ah, luckless speech and bootless boast, for which poor Gilpin was to pay full dearly! Even as he spoke an ass brayed loudly and clearly just the other side of a hedge. The horse gave a sudden snort—it might have been a lion's roar from the fuss he made about it—reared up on his hind legs, and then galloped off with all his might, just as he had done before!

Away went Gilpin, and away once more went Gilpin's hat and wig. This time he lost them sooner than before, for they were a size too big for him. And, once more stooping down and clinging tight to his horse's neck, he began his wild race again, back towards London.

When Mistress Gilpin had recovered from her first alarm at seeing her dear husband racing down into the country in such terrible peril, she had not wasted time in vain lamentations. She drew out half-a-crown, and turning to the youth who had driven them to the "Bell," she said, holding the coin up before his eyes:

"This shall be yours if you bring back my husband safe and well."

The youth, nothing loath at the prospect of earning an extra half-crown, mounted the fastest of the chaise horses, and rode off at once to try and overtake John

Gilpin. He thought at first that he was going to have an easier task than he had imagined, for soon after he had started whom should he meet but Gilpin galloping home again. Drawing his horse to the side of the road, the postboy leant out from his saddle and tried to snatch at Gilpin's rein as he flew by. But he was not quite quick enough, and instead of stopping the horse as he had intended to do, he only frightened the terrified animal more, and made him run even faster than before, if that were possible!

Away went Gilpin, and away went the postboy at his heels, the postboy's horse quite enjoying the fun, and glad not to have the heavy wheels of the chaise lumbering behind him. On and on they flew, and presently they passed a party of gentlemen on horseback, who, seeing Gilpin dashing along with the postboy at his heels, imagined that he was a thief, and rode hard in pursuit, shouting as they went:

"Stop thief! Stop thief! A highwayman!" Not one of them was silent, and each and all that passed that way joined in the mad chase.

And now again the turnpike gates flew open as Gilpin came in sight, the turnpike men thinking, as before, that he rode a race. And so he did! And won it, too, for he got first to town, and at the very place where he had first mounted he got down at last!

But what his pursuers said when they caught him up and found that he wasn't a highwayman after all, and what Mistress Gilpin said when she came home, and what the calender said when his horse was returned to him, all spent and exhausted and lame from the day's adventures, I really cannot tell you, for history doesn't say. And I'm afraid I can't tell you, either, if John Gilpin ever went for another ride. I shouldn't think that he ever ventured upon horseback again after his terrible experience, but if he did all I can say is—I only wish I had been there to see!

The Prisoner of Chillon

ON a rock in the Lake of Geneva there stands a gloomy castle, deep in the dungeons of which prisoners were chained in olden days. Many miserable creatures lived and died within its walls, sometimes for no crime at all, but merely because they had had the misfortune to offend some great man.

In one of the lowest dungeons of this castle one poor prisoner lived for many long years. He was one of six brothers, the sons of a brave father, all of whom had suffered for their faith. The father and one of his sons had perished at the stake, two more had been slain in battle, fighting for the cause which they believed to be right, and the three remaining sons had been cast into the gloomy dungeons of the Castle of Chillon. There, chained fast to great stone pillars, unable to move a single pace or to see each other's faces, they were left to languish out their lives.

At first they tried to be brave. They talked cheerfully to one another, each endeavouring to keep up the courage of his brothers. Although they could not see each other's faces distinctly in the gloomy light, yet they still had their speech left to them. They told stories of the old days, sang merry songs, and made bold plans for their escape—though there was little hope of escape from gloomy Chillon. But after a while, as the weeks and months passed on, hope died within them, and the terrible confinement began to prey upon their health.

The second brother was the first to give way. He had always been so strong and healthy, so used to living the free, outdoor life of the hunter, that the darkness and imprisonment told upon him sooner than on his brothers. For many months he lay in his chains weak and ill, but at last his captive spirit found release, and one morning his keepers found him dead.

Then the youngest brother began to fail. He had been his father's favourite child, because of the likeness he bore to his mother, who had died long before. The eldest brother tried hard to cheer the sick boy. He loved his youngest brother dearly, and it was terrible for him to know that he was dying day by day while he was unable to do anything to help. He was not even able to draw near enough to touch him with his chained hands. The sick lad was very patient through his illness; perhaps he was glad to think that his imprisonment would soon be over. Of the two, the poor elder brother was the more to be pitied, for he had to sit by in helpless inactivity, listening to his brother's breathing growing more and more feeble, knowing that the hour was rapidly approaching when he would be left alone in the darkness and solitude to drag out the weary days of his imprisonment as best he might.

One day as the two brothers sat in silence, the one too feeble, the other too sad to talk, the breathing of the dying boy stopped. The elder brother called aloud to him, but no reply came, and, half mad with grief and anxiety, he struggled so at his fetters that, iron though they were, he burst them asunder, and sprang to his brother's side. But the boy was dead; he had reached him too late to be of any assistance. He was left alone in the gloomy dungeon.

What happened after that the prisoner hardly knew. His jailers came to him, bringing him the usual bread and water and coarse prison fare, but he lay half-unconscious on the ground, longing only to die and be with his brothers. How long he lay in this kind of trance he did not know, but suddenly he was aroused by the clear, sweet singing of a bird. Looking up in astonishment he saw, perched high up in a crevice in the wall, a bird with azure-coloured wings. Never before had he seen a bird resembling it, and it seemed to the poor prisoner that it was his brother's soul come down to him from Paradise.

Not for long did the little visitor stay in the dungeon. Its song finished, it spread its wings and flew away through the crevice; but it had done its work. It had brought back a little hope and peace to the mind of the captive man.

A change came to the prisoner after his brother's death. His keepers seemed to grow more compassionate; they left his broken chain unfastened, and he was at liberty to stride from side to side of the dungeon, trailing the broken links behind him. He was even allowed to make a rough footing up to the crevice from which the bird had sung, not in the hope of escaping, for that was impossible, but in order that he might once again gaze out over the lake to the blue mountains in the distance.

Life grew happier for him after that. He was utterly alone in the world, and there was no human being he need be anxious about now. He was no longer chained in a torturing position at the base of the stone pillar, but was free to stretch his limbs within the confines of his prison; and, best of all, through the crevice in the wall he was able to catch a glimpse into the outside world. He could see the mountains, standing unchanged as they had stood through such countless years. He could see the blue waters of the Rhone River as it leapt over the rocks and boulders to the lake—sometimes, even, he could hear the noise of the foaming torrents.

Far away in the distance he could see the white walls of the town, or the still whiter sails of the fishing-boats as they plied to and fro upon the lake. A little island was directly in front of his peephole, the only one in view, a small, green isle scarcely broader than his dungeon floor. Three tall trees grew upon it, and beautiful flowers of almost every hue, and the wind, as it blew into the prisoner's face, seemed to bring the scent of them to him on its bosom. Fish swam by the castle walls. By gazing very intently the prisoner could see them.

And sometimes he would see the great eagles from the mountain-tops circling in the air. But the sight of the eagles always brought pain and sadness into his heart. The birds were so strong, so free, so happy, and the captive would slide back into the darkness of his dungeon at the sight of them, almost wishing that he had never left it to gaze upon the fair world he could never call his own again.

But freedom came to him at last, though how long it was before it came he never knew. It might have been days or months or years, for he took no count of time; but one day men came to set him free. He did not ask any questions of them or why or wherefore he was to be set free. He was stunned by the long silence and the darkness, and he let them lead him out without a word.

But now that he could go where he liked he found himself longing for his dungeon again. He had been a prisoner so long that he did not know what to do with his liberty now that he had regained it. He had made friends with the spiders and the mice that had lived in his prison, and it hurt him to have to say good-bye to them, knowing that he should never see them again. Even his chains had grown dear to him.

Poor captive! Freedom had come too late to be of any value to him. His hair had grown grey—not with years, but with the suffering through which he had passed. His limbs were bent and feeble from long disuse, and he bore upon them the marks of the chains he had worn, marks which would never leave him while he lived. The very sunshine was painful to his eyes, which had grown so used to the gloom of his dismal prison. He had no friend or living relative in the world; the only thing left to him was pride in having borne all the pain and suffering and in having been true to the faith for which his father and brothers had given up their lives. He was worthy to meet them in Heaven, he thought to himself, and the thought gave him courage and strength to go on living until it should please God to end his weary life and re-unite him to his loved ones once again.

"One in fire and two in field,
Their belief with blood have sealed;
Dying as their father died,
For the God their foes denied.
Three were in a dungeon cast,
Of whom this wreck is left the last."

The Boy and the Angel

THERE was once a poor boy named Theocrite who had been brought up amongst the monks at a convent. He was given his own special tasks to do, and day by day he laboured at his work, singing praises to the God Who had given him life and Who kept him well and strong to labour for Him. At morning and evening, at noonday and at midnight was his voice uplifted.

"Praise God," he sang, and his voice rose up so sweet and pure, carrying with it such unfeigned love, such trust and confidence, that God on His great throne stooped down to listen to the lad's song.

One day, as Theocrite finished his song of praise and turned again to his work, one of the monks, who had been listening unknown to the boy, entered the cell where he worked and smiled at him.

"Well done, my son," he said kindly. "I doubt not God hath heard thy voice to-day as well as though thou wert praising Him in the Pope's great way at Rome. This is Easter Day, as thou knowest, and to-day beneath Peter's dome the Pope praises God even as thou hast praised Him from thy humble cell."

Theocrite flung back the curls that fell about his face as he stooped over his work and sighed.

"Ah!" he said, "would God that I too might praise

Him once in that great way! Could I but lift my heart to Him as Pope at Rome there would be nothing left for me to wish for."

The day passed away. Night came, and when the morning shone once more Theocrite was gone. The Angel Gabriel had heard the boy's wish, and had answered the dream of many a long year. He bore the boy from the craftsman's cell where he had laboured so long and faithfully and set him in St. Peter's at Rome—a priest who should one day be Pope.

But God missed the voice that rose no longer from the small cell.

"Neither night nor day, evening or morning, brings me now the voice of my delight," He said.

Then the Angel Gabriel spread his wings and, leaving his place in Heaven, he flew down to earth and entered the cell in place of Theocrite. He took the boy's form and laboured at the humble work; and morning, evening, noon and night he lifted up his voice in praise to God as Theocrite had done.

And here for many a year he lived and worked, bending over his trade, content to do God's will wherever he might be. And he who seemed to be Theocrite grew from boyhood to manhood, from manhood to old age, and ever as he worked he sang the song which Theocrite had sung. But God from His throne heard the song, and knew that the voice was not Theocrite's voice.

"In my ear there is a praise which has in it no doubt, no fear," He said. "It is a song of perfect obedience, perfect worship, perfect willingness to do My will; but it is not the voice of human love which used to please Me. I miss My little human praise."

Gabriel heard God's voice, and throwing off his disguise, he took once more his angel's form and flew to Rome. It was Easter morning, and as the angel hovered over the great dome of St. Peter's the new Pope Theocrite stood in his tiring-room close by, waiting for the moment when he should begin the ceremony of praise. As he waited all his past life came back to his memory, from the time when he used to work in his little cell to this moment, when he stood waiting for the fulfilment of his boyhood's dreams. And as he stood lost in thought the Angel Gabriel appeared before him, as he had appeared to him once before, so many years ago.

"I bore thee from thy craftsman's cell and set thee here," said the angel, "but I did not well. Your voice grew weak and ever weaker as you rose to power and honour, and God has missed your song of praise, the praise which even I could not supply, though I left my angel-sphere and took your place. Go back to your cell and become once more the humble craftsman, and praise God again in the early way. I will remain here and take your place as Pope."

So Gabriel bore Theocrite back to his cell, and there once more Theocrite bent over his daily task as he had done in his boyhood's days. There, day by day, he lifted up his voice to God as he had done long ago; and bending down from His throne to listen, God smiled and was content. For this was once more the song in which He had delighted, the little human strain of praise and love.

The Raven

A COMPANY of pigs was once feeding beneath a great oak tree in a forest. The acorns were ripe and were falling fast, and the pigs grunted contentedly as they crunched them. When they had cleared the ground they trotted off, for the wind was growing high and rain was beginning to fall, and since there was nothing left to eat under the oak tree, they were better at home in shelter for the night.

There was one acorn left under the tree, but the pigs had not noticed it, and, even if they had, one acorn would not have gone very far amongst them all. But after they had gone a raven flew by, and his sharp eyes spied out the acorn which the pigs had left.

This raven was blacker than the blackest jet. He was very old, and people said that he belonged to a witch and possessed half-magical powers of his own. Certainly, as he flew along in the rain, his feathers were not even wet! He swooped down and picked up the acorn which the pigs had left, and flying away with it, he buried it deep in the ground beside a broad river. Then he flew away.

Many autumns and many springs passed. Many summers and many winters did the raven travel on his wandering wings, and many strange sights did he see, and many were the adventures that befell him. But at last, after a long, long time, he came back to the place where he had buried the acorn, and with him he brought his mate. The acorn had grown to a tall young tree by this time, and in its topmost boughs the ravens built their nest and had their young ones. They were very happy together, for they loved each other very dearly.

But their happiness was not to last long. One day there came to the river-side a man who was dressed in the leathern dress of a forester. He was stern and rugged of feature, and in his hand he had an axe. He did not speak a word, but setting to work immediately, with many a stout stroke he brought down the poor ravens' own oak tree.

The two ravens hung around the tree screaming and wailing, while the sturdy young stem quivered beneath the woodman's blows. But their outcry was of no avail. The man went steadily on with his work, and soon the tree fell. The ravens' young ones were killed, for they were not yet fully fledged and could not fly away, and the poor parent birds saw their little ones lying dead on the ground before their eyes.

Bitterly did the ravens mourn, and presently the mother raven died of grief and sorrow. And at this double loss in the heart of the black raven there sprang up a bitter hatred and a longing for revenge. He hovered around the spot where he had been so happy, watching the woodman at his work, and planning and hoping that one day something might happen to avenge the death of his dear ones.

The woodman sawed the boughs of the oak tree from the trunk, and let them float down the river to the wood-yard. There, workmen took them and stripped them of their bark, and sawed them into planks. The planks were loved and trusted his master, and it almost seemed as though he knew how much hung on his being able to maintain his speed.

For some hours they galloped on in dead silence. It was midnight when they had started from Ghent, but at Lokeren the cock crew, and twilight began to dawn. At Boom the yellow morning star was seen, and at Duffeld it was morning as plain as could be. From Mecheln church steeple a clock chimed out, and then one of the men broke the silence the three had maintained since they started on their ride.

"Yet there is time," he said; and then relapsed into silence once more.

As they reached Aerschot the sun broke through the mist. The riders as they galloped by could see the cattle in the meadows, black shapes rising out of the thick haze that lay on the grass. Every moment the surrounding scenery grew clearer as the sun rolled away the morning mist, yet still the three men galloped steadily onwards, though they could tell that their horses were beginning to feel the strain of that terrible ride. And by Hasselt one of the men gave a groan as he felt his mare stumble and totter beneath him.

"Stay, Dirck!" cried the man Joris, he who had spoken before. "Stay your spur. Your Roos has galloped bravely—it's not her fault. We'll tell them when we reach Aix——" But he left his speech unfinished, for with a quick wheeze of her chest and a horrible heave of her flank, Dirck's mare sank down upon her haunches, and her rider came heavily with her to the ground.

The two men who were left had no time to waste in pitying their comrade's misfortune. They might not even

" He bent over his horse's head, petting and caressing him."

stop to see if he was hurt, for not for one moment dared they draw rein. Aix must be saved if they could save it. Friendship and all else must be forgotten in that stern race against time.

On and on they flew, past Looz, past Tongres, while the sun blazed down upon them pitilessly from a cloudless sky, until suddenly in the distance a white spire was seen against the blue horizon.

"Gallop!" gasped Joris, "for Aix is in sight! How they'll greet us——" And then in a moment his horse rolled over and lay on the ground, dead as a stone, leaving the third horse and his rider to bear the whole weight of the news which alone could save Aix.

The third man gave a despairing glance at the white spire which still seemed so far away. Could they possibly do it? Already his horse's eyes were bloodshot and dim, blood was beginning to spurt from his nostrils, he was almost done. At any moment he too might fall dead upon the road as Joris's horse had fallen—and then what would happen to Aix? But of that the rider dared not think.

He bent over his horse's head, petting and caressing him.

"Roland, Roland!" he cried. "We must do it; we must!" And it seemed as though Roland understood his rider's words, for he galloped on bravely, though his breath came in great shuddering gasps, while his master flung off his coat and his boots, his belt, his holsters, and everything of which he could possibly rid himself in order to lessen the burden the brave horse must carry. And still brave Roland galloped on and on, while every moment brought the white spires of Aix nearer.

"Brave Roland! Good Roland! My horse without peer!" cried the rider, standing up in his stirrups, patting his steed's neck, clapping his hands, almost mad with excitement, laughing, singing, cheering his horse on, until at last into Aix Roland galloped and stood.

They had done it! Aix was saved, though how he told the news that saved her the rider never knew. All he remembered was sitting on the ground while the people flocked around him, his one thought for the brave horse who had accomplished such a wonderful ride, and who now lay gasping with his head between his master's knees. But he told his tale somehow, and when the people understood what the horse had done a mighty cheer arose from the crowd, and somebody brought in haste the last measure of wine that was left in the town.

"It is no more than his due," cried the burghers, as they helped the horseman to pour the liquid down brave Roland's throat; and they rejoiced as much as the horse's master when the gallant steed showed signs of reviving.

And that is the story of how the good town of Aix was once saved from a terrible fate.

And all I remember is, friends flocking round
As I sate with his head 'twixt my knees on the ground,
And no voice but was praising this Roland of mine,
As I poured down his throat our last measure of wine,
Which (the burgesses voted by common consent)
Was no more than his due who brought good news from Ghent.

The Princess

A YOUNG Prince once lived in a northern country. He was very fair to look at, with blue eyes, and yellow hair that clustered round his head almost like the curls of a maiden. But besides being beautiful, he was tall and strong and brave, and the people of his father's kingdom loved him very dearly.

When the Prince was still but a boy he had been betrothed to the little daughter of the king who ruled over the country to the south of his father's lands. The little Princess was but eight years old at the time, and she grew up from girlhood to womanhood without ever seeing her future husband, though news of her wonderful grace and beauty often reached the Prince in his northern court. The Prince longed for the time to come when the Princess would be wholly his, and next to his heart he wore a portrait of his bride-to-be, and one dark curl of hair, which had been sent to him at the time of his betrothal.

At last the Prince came of age, and his father's councillors decided that it was time that he should be married. The old King sent ambassadors with many rich jewels and gifts to fetch the Princess, and the King and the Prince and all their people waited eagerly for their return. But when the ambassadors came back they came without the Princess. They brought valuable presents from King Gama, the Princess's father, and many messages of apology, but they did not bring the eagerly expected bride. It seemed that the Princess Ida, whose mother had died when she was still almost a baby, had been terribly spoilt by her father and brothers, and had grown up with a very determined will of her own. The lady who had taken charge of her education had filled her head with strange ideas about the independence of women; and when the Princess was old enough she had persuaded her father to give her a large estate, on which she had founded a college for girls. There with the Lady Blanche, her governess, and another of her woman friends, the Princess lived and ruled, while women from all over the country flocked to her academy to enrol themselves as students. The Princess regarded her childish betrothal as in no way binding upon her, and utterly refused to wed the Prince or any other man. She had dedicated herself to the service of her downtrodden sisters, she said, and had made up her mind to spend her life amongst the students of her college. Her father sent many polite messages of regret, and begged the Prince's father not to hold him responsible for his daughter's whims.

The morning the ambassadors returned the Prince was summoned in haste to his father's presence-chamber. Accompanied by two of his closest friends, Florian and Cyril, he obeyed the summons. Florian had been brought up with him from childhood, and was as dear to the Prince as though he had been his brother, and Cyril, though he was a somewhat later acquaintance, was a great friend of both. Cyril was a brave and gallant gentleman, very just and generous at heart, though he was at times given too much to revelry and brawling. But in spite of this failing the other two loved him dearly, and were often able by their influence to restrain him in his more boisterous moods.

When the three young men had entered the presence-chamber the ambassadors delivered their message. The King's face grew purple with anger as he listened, and when the ambassadors had finished speaking he rose to his feet and tore King Gama's letter into fragments. Then he seized one of the gifts the king had sent to appease him, a wonderful piece of embroidery, almost priceless in value, and rent it in two, swearing that he would send a hundred thousand men to bring this wilful Princess to his court, whether she would or no.

"Send for my captains of war," he shouted wrathfully. "Let me commune with them what had best be done."

But here the Prince stepped forward.

"My father," he said, "let me go to the court of this king and find out what lies beneath this matter. Maybe, when I have seen my bride for myself, I may rue the bargain."

Then Florian came and stood beside the Prince.

"Sire," he said, "I have a sister at the foreign court, as perhaps you remember—the Lady Psyche who wedded with a nobleman from thence. He died some little time ago, leaving her wealthy and her own mistress, and now I hear that she is with the Princess and waits upon her continually. Through her this misunderstanding might be cleared up. I pray you let me go with the Prince and sift the matter for ourselves."

"And let me go too," cried Cyril eagerly. "I'll serve the Prince well if aught goes amiss, and I am tired of living this life of ease and luxury."

But the King would not hear of the Prince's going.

"No, you shall not go," he roared roughly. "We ourselves, in iron gauntlets, will crush her maiden fancies dead. Break up the council!" And he rose and strode wrathfully out of the chamber, furious at having been thus set at naught by a maid.

But the Prince and his two friends determined to steal away unknown to the King and visit this wilful Princess for themselves. And a few days later they left the court unperceived, crossed the frontier, and came by easy stages to the capital of the foreign land, where in the imperial palace they found King Gama, the Princess's father.

He was a little, dry, withered old man in appearance, not at all like a king to look at. He treated his three visitors with great honour and courtesy, but when the Prince spoke of the object of his errand he shook his head.

"You do us too much honour, Prince," he said. "I would with all my heart you had my daughter! But there were two widows here, the Lady Psyche and the Lady Blanche, who have stuffed her mind full with silly fancies, maintaining that with equal teaching a woman was the equal of a man. They harped on this one theme continually; our very banquets and dances were broken up with talk of women and of women's work, until my ears grew hot to hear it! Knowledge, my daughter held, was all in all! And then, sir, she took to writing odes! Awful odes they were, for sure, though they that know such things called them masterpieces. I am no critic of such matters. I only sought for peace, but masterpieces they may have been, for certainly they mastered me! At last she begged a boon, a certain summer palace of mine close to your father's frontier, on which to found a university for maidens. At first I said no; but, being an easy man, I gave it in the end, and there she fled, and has, I hear, stocked her college full of women.

"We know no more, for they will allow no men to enter their doors—not even my son Arac, though he and Ida were boon companions before she took this whim. I am loath to breed dispute between myself and mine; but since you think me bound by that old treaty—with some right I confess—I will give you letters to my daughter if you care to journey to this college of hers. Although, to tell you the truth, I think your chance of seeing her may be rated at less than nothing."

But the young Prince would pay no heed to the king's advice. All that he had heard of the Princess Ida only fired his desire to see her for himself, and accepting the letters King Gama offered to write for him, he rode back towards the north again with his two friends until they came to a little rustic town close to the summer palace.

The three travellers entered the hostel of the place and called for the landlord. When he came they plied him with wine, and, showing him the king's letters, they asked for his counsel. The host gave a long, low whistle and stared at the letters blankly; then he shook his head.

"'Tis clear against all their rules that you should go to the college," he said, "I can give you no advice, sirs. Once I saw the Princess as she passed, and heard her speak, and, upon my life, I can tell you she scared me. I never saw her like before. She looked as grand as doomsday and as grave. I have no wish to see more of her, yet still I reverence my liege lady, and I always make a point to post with mares now, to please her fancy. All the land here is ploughed and tilled by women for miles around, and folks say all the swine are sows in compliment to her."

A sudden idea flashed into the Prince's mind. He remembered once how he and his two companions had dressed as women for a pageant in his father's hall, and how well they had passed for ladies in the crowd. He suggested to Florian and Cyril that they should disguise themselves now and apply for admittance to the college as three maidens from a foreign country who desired to avail themselves of the new education for women. Florian and Cyril hailed the plan rapturously, and the host was sent out at once to purchase female garments. The good man brought back a large bundle, and then he himself, shaking with laughter, helped the three men to attire themselves in their strange array. He laced up bodices and adjusted ribbons with a great zeal, and when at length three tall and buxom but good-looking damsels stood before him, he was immensely pleased with the result of his labours. The Prince gave him a costly bribe to ensure his silence, and then the three, mounting their steeds side-saddle, rode out on their bold adventure.

It was dusk when they reached the college, and the lights from the windows of the stately building glittered like fireflies through the dark. The riders passed under an archway upon which was written some inscription, and found themselves in the college grounds. They rode up to the great doorway, and two sturdy stablewomen came running to help them dismount and lead their horses to shelter. A buxom porteress stepped forward and ushered them into the college, and finding they had come to stay, led them to some vacant rooms. The new arrivals asked the woman some questions about the place, and they found that students were expected to enrol themselves under one or other of the two tutors, the Lady Psyche or the Lady Blanche.

" Which is the prettiest and the best-natured? " asked the Prince.

" Oh, the Lady Psyche," came the unhesitating reply; and sitting down at the writing-table the Prince wrote in a disguised female hand:

> " Three ladies of the Northern Empire pray
> Your Highness would enrol them with your own,
> As Lady Psyche's pupils."

This note, after he had sealed it, the Prince gave to the porteress to deliver to the Princess, and then the three conspirators, laughing and joking in undertones, divested themselves of their strange attire and went to bed.

Early next morning the college porteress came again, bringing them academic gowns of lilac silk, bound round with gold braid. The Princess Ida was waiting to receive them, she told them, and, helping them into their gowns, she told them to follow her. She led the three men through the long corridors, and out into the courtyard and terraces where groups of young girls, as fresh and sweet as flowers in May, walked or sat, with books in their hands. The new-comers had no time to look and admire as they would have liked, for their guide led them quickly by, and up a flight of steps into a hall where the Princess herself was sitting.

The Prince drew his breath with a gasp of admiration as his eyes fell upon her. She was indeed beautiful—more beautiful even than report had said. She was tall and graceful, with a form that might have belonged to some goddess of old. Her eyes were dark and compelling, and grace and power and beauty seemed to breathe from every part of her long, slender hands and feet. She rose as her new students entered and greeted them kindly though with great dignity.

"We give you welcome," she said graciously. "You are the first fruits of the stranger to enrol within these halls. In after years men will rank you with me, the pioneers of those who brought release and hope to women." Then, as she looked at the new arrivals more closely, she gave a little exclamation of astonishment.

"What—are the ladies of your land so tall?" she said.

"We of the court are," answered Cyril.

"You come from the court?" asked the Princess. "Then you know the Prince?"

"Indeed we do," said Cyril glibly. "He is indeed the climax of his age! And as though there were but one rose in the world, and that your Highness, he worships your ideal."

"We scarcely thought, here in our own halls, to hear this barren clink of compliment," she said witheringly. "Your flight from out your bookless wilds seemed to argue that you had some love of knowledge, but your language proves you still the child. Whatever the Prince may think of us, we dream not of the Prince. When we set our hand to this great work we purposed not to wed, nor yet to talk of wedding; and you yourselves, ladies, on entering here will do well to cast aside those foolish tricks and graces which make us toys of men."

The three listened with downcast eyes, abashed at her rebuke, yet scarcely able to restrain their laughter. Then an officer of some sort rose and read aloud to them the rules which all students who entered the college were expected to keep. To these the three strangers hardly listened as attentively as they should have done, but when the reading was over they signed their names in the register as they were directed, and the Princess formally admitted them as members of the college. Then she sent them away to join the class which was being held by the tutor whom they had chosen.

Back across the terraces and the halls they went to the room where Lady Psyche was presiding over a class of girls. The teacher herself looked hardly more than a girl, although at her side, fast asleep, lay a little two-year-old baby, her little girl, Aglaia. Florian leant towards the others and whispered softly :

" My sister—comely, too, by all that's fair ! " But Cyril hushed him, and when the three had settled themselves the class began.

In spite of her girlish appearance, the Lady Psyche was eloquent enough, and the three men sat marvelling at her learning, and the fluency of her oration. They sat as quiet as any of the real students, until at last the lecture was over and the class rose up to go. Then the tutor beckoned to her new pupils, and when they came to her she welcomed them kindly and gave them a few words of advice as to the books they would require. She was about to leave them and pass on when suddenly her eyes met Florian's, and she started back with a cry of horror and dismay.

" My brother ! " she exclaimed, shrinking away from him, while her face turned pale.

Florian smiled at her gaily.

" Well, my sister," he said.

"Oh," she cried in anguish. "What do you here, and in this dress? And who are these? Oh, they too are men! A wolf within the fold—a pack of wolves—a plot to ruin all!"

Florian laughed aloud at her dismay.

"It is no plot, my sister," he said, but the Lady Psyche's distress was genuine enough, and she would not be reassured.

"Wretched boy—what have you done?" she cried. "Did you not read the inscription on the gate: 'Let no man enter in on pain of death'?"

"No, we did not," answered Florian, still laughing. "And, even if we had, surely the sweet sirens of your academy are not such as would chant over the bones of dead men?"

"Do not jest!" cried the lady in distress. "You will find it is no matter for jesting. My vow binds me to speak—and, oh, the iron will of the Princess, our Head!"

"Well, then, Psyche," said Florian, "take my life an you will. Bury me beside the gate for a warning, and cut this epitaph above my bones: 'Here lies a brother, slain by his sister for the common good of womenkind.'"

"Let me die too," said Cyril gallantly, "having once seen and heard the Lady Psyche."

"And I also," said the Prince. "Although I come thus in disguise, madam, I love the truth. I am the Prince, your countryman, affianced years ago to the Princess Ida. Since there was no other way to come here, I have come thus."

"Oh, sir, oh, Prince!" cried Psyche, growing more and more agitated with every moment. "I have no country now. Love-whispers may not breathe within this vestal hall, and how can I say 'live'?"

The three men pleaded with her, half in earnest, half in fun. Florian appealed to her by all she held sacred in the old love which they had borne to each other as brother and sister. The Prince pointed out to her all that her house owed in loyalty to her country and her country's prince. And Cyril, using perhaps a stronger argument than all, turned to the little sleeping Aglaia, and asked Psyche how could she, the mother of such a child, betray three of her own countrymen to death. And at last their arguments prevailed over Psyche's sense of duty, and they wrung a promise from her that she would hold her peace.

"But one thing you must do," she said. "You must slip away at the earliest opportunity—to-day, if possible, to-morrow at the very latest. It shall be said that the foreign women were barbarous, that they would not learn and so fled. Promise that you will do this, else you must surely die!"

The three men could not do less than promise, and then Psyche, having gained this point, seemed a little more at ease. She turned to Florian with a faint smile and held out her hands to him.

"I knew you as soon as I looked closely at you," she said. "Though you have grown, you have not altered much. I am both sad and glad to see you, Florian. *I* give you to death? Oh, my brother, it was duty spoke, not I. Pardon my seeming harshness."

She threw herself impetuously into his arms, and while the other two stood a little apart, she and Florian talked eagerly together. While they stood so, Florian with his arms about his sister, there came a voice from the doorway which made them all start.

"I have brought a message from the Lady Blanche," said the voice.

Brother and sister fell apart, and the others turned hastily round to see who spoke. There, at the entrance to the room, with her hand upon the latch, stood a girl with sunny, golden hair and eyes as blue and sweet and clear as the crystal waters of the morning sea.

Psyche took a step forward.

"Melissa, you! You heard us?"

"Oh, pardon me," cried the girl. "I heard, I could not help it. But, dearest Lady Psyche, fear me not—I would not give three gallant gentlemen to death."

"I trust you," said Psyche, recovering herself a little. "We have always been friends, we two, have we not, and I know that you are trustworthy. But, oh, dearest, be prudent! Remember your mother's jealous temperament—the Lady Blanche has ever been my foe. Tell her nothing, let her guess nothing, or I shall lose my honour and these three gentlemen their lives."

"Fear not, I will be careful," said Melissa reassuringly.

Lady Psyche turned to the three men.

"Now go," she said; "we have already been too long together. Keep your hoods about your faces, it is the rule to do so here if we wish to think deeply and not be disturbed. Speak as little as you can, and do not mix with the others, and remember your promise. All, I trust, will yet be well."

The Prince and his companions, half vexed, half amused at the turn events had taken, left their tutor, and for the rest of that day wandered about the college grounds. Cyril had fallen deeply in love with the Lady Psyche, and already he was making plans to lure her away from these old grey halls. Florian was thinking of Melissa's blue eyes and sunny hair; and the Prince was dreaming of his Princess, wondering how he was to woo her, sometimes almost despairing of ever winning her, yet determined to declare his love to her one day, or die in the attempt.

So the day passed, and the night, and the next morning came, and the three intruders rose from sleep and dressed themselves once more in their unaccustomed garments. They went downstairs early, and wandered out into the grounds, discussing their plans for escaping from the college. As they stood beside a fountain, watching the play of its waters, Melissa came up to them. Her face was pale from lack of sleep, and her eyes were misty still from shedding many tears.

"You must fly!" she cried as she drew near. "Fly while yet you may. My mother knows!"

"Knows! How does she know?" asked the Prince, and the girl bowed her face in her hands and wept.

"It was my fault," she said, "and yet not wholly mine. My mother is jealous of Lady Psyche. She thinks that the Princess loves her better than herself, and every night when we are alone together in our chamber she rails at Lady Psyche. Last night she began to speak scornfully of you. The Lady Psyche's countrywomen! She did not envy her—who ever saw such wild barbarians? Girls? They were more like men. And, oh, sirs, I could not help it, but at these words my cheeks began to burn and burn. Her lynx eyes were fixed upon me, and suddenly she guessed the truth.

"Why—these—are men?" she said. And I shuddered, and she caught me fiercely by the shoulder.

"And you know it!" she cried. "And she, Lady Psyche, knows it too!" And so my mother learnt the truth, though through no word from me. As soon as she is risen she is going to inform the Princess. The Lady Psyche will be crushed, but your lives may yet be saved if only you will fly at once. But, I pray you, pardon me before you go."

The poor child was weeping again in her distress, and Cyril tried to laugh her tears away.

"What pardon do we owe you?" he said gaily. "See, I will go to this marble mother of yours and melt her into wax. Mayhap she will grant us at least some further time of grace." And with no more ado he went, though Melissa shook her curly head doubtfully and said he would not prosper.

But he did prosper to a certain extent, and presently he came back to his two companions—Melissa had left them by this time, for she dared not stay with them longer—and told them of his success.

"It was a hard task, though," he said with a grin. "I had to force my way through solid opposition, I can tell you. By my faith, I'd rather clear a primeval forest any day than have to hammer more at this reverend gentlewoman. I reached her door and knocked, and, being bidden to enter, I entered and found her, as good luck would have it, on the very point of going to the Princess with her tale. I was as courteous as a man could well be; every phrase was well oiled, yet, maiden-meek, I prayed her for concealment. She demanded to know why we came, and, following your example, Prince, I told her the truth. I pleaded with her for our lives, hoping to touch her woman's heart. But that did not move her, nor yet my plea that harm would come of it to her daughter did she tell. Then I told her that war with your father would surely follow our deaths, but she replied that her duty was clear whatever might come of it; her duty was to speak. I was wellnigh discouraged by this time; yet I knew that there is no rock so hard but that a little wave may beat admission somewhere in time, so I tried another tack. I told her that she would lose nothing if she favoured us. I promised her that did she but help my Prince to gain his rightful bride we would see her put in the first place of all. And this did move her somewhat. She has promised to think it over and let us know her answer some time to-day. Meanwhile she will be mute. This much I have gained, at least."

Just as Cyril finished his tale, and before the others could discuss the matter properly, there came a message to them from the Princess. That afternoon she was riding abroad to take a survey of a certain piece of land in the neighbourhood, and she invited the stranger students to ride with her. The invitation was as good as a command and could not well be refused, and, the minds of all three adventurers being set upon it, a message of acceptance and thanks was framed and sent. And that afternoon, at the appointed hour, the three were summoned to the great porch, where the Princess stood awaiting them. She looked very beautiful as she stood there, her foot on one of the tame leopards which accompanied her wherever she went. She herself had tamed the fierce beasts, and now they were as gentle as kittens with their mistress.

The strangers, being provided with steeds and cavalcade, set out, the Prince riding beside Ida, Florian beside Melissa, while Cyril kept by Psyche, with whom he was falling more and more deeply in love. It was a happy ride to all three of them, especially to the Prince, whose pulses seemed to beat the faster for the nearness of the woman he had worshipped from afar for so many years. She was even sweeter and more desirable than he had imagined, but though he was so happy, yet at times he grew a little doubtful and sad, wondering in himself whether this strange poet-princess, with her grand imagination, and her pure, lofty ideals, might ever be won.

At length the riding party reached a flowery meadow where they all dismounted; and here the Princess commanded that her pavilion should be put up, while she and her immediate companions set out to climb to the mountain top, which was the object of their ride. She still kept beside the Prince, and his heart beat more and more quickly, as sometimes she leant on him for guidance or gave him her hand to help him over a stony path. It was all he could do at times to refrain from catching her in his arms, but that would have betrayed everything, and so by a great effort of self-control he restrained his passion. He walked beside her, answering her questions, and doing all he could to prevent her from seeing the emotion which was nearly overwhelming him.

They reached the mountain-top, and then they descended again to the pavilion, where, reclining on downy pillows, they lay and rested, while serving-maids handed round wine and dainty foods.

When all had eaten and drunken Ida called for music, and one after another her maids rose up and sang. After a while she turned to the Prince, who was still beside her.

"Know you no song of your own land?" she asked, and the Prince remembered a song that he himself had once made. It was a love song, one he had composed while he was dreaming of the Princess long before he had ever seen her; and now, imitating a woman's voice as best he could, he rose up and sang it.

He sang the song with redoubled fervour and meaning, for it seemed to him that the words had grown truer and more full of sentiment now that he had seen his Princess. But Ida's lips curled scornfully as the song ended, for love songs were little to her taste. Indeed, it was one of the rules of her college that no mention should be made of the word "love," in so far as it referred to the love between men and women.

"A mere love-poem," she said disdainfully. "Know, my friend, we hold such of slight account. Great is song when used to great and worthy ends; but songs such as this do but blaspheme the muse. Know you no song, the true growth of your soul, that will tell us the manners of your countrywomen?"

She looked at the Prince kindly, in spite of the rebuke conveyed by her words, and her eyes, shining with expectation, fixed themselves on his. He racked his brains to think of such a song, for at that moment he would have done anything in the world to please her. But while he thought, Cyril, whose dare-devil nature had been aroused by the wine he had just drunk and the sense of peril by which they were surrounded, suddenly began to troll forth a tavern song, unfit for ladies' ears at any time, doubly unfit now in this strange situation. Florian endeavoured to hush him, but in vain. He sang on recklessly, while Lady Psyche flushed and trembled, and Melissa hid her face in her hands. The other girls and women stared at him in horrified amazement, and the Princess cried indignantly:

"Forbear, forbear!"

The Prince, angered beyond control at the insult offered to the Princess, sprang to his feet.

"Forbear, sir!" he cried passionately, and forgetting in the heat of the moment the part he should have played, he struck the singer full upon the breast.

With an angry oath Cyril started up, but what he intended to do was never known. A shriek arose amongst the women as they realised that the three strangers were men. There was a clamour and confusion in the tent, and the Princess, endeavouring to still the disorder, cried loudly:

"To horse, to horse!"

Her command was instantly obeyed. The women rushed from the pavilion in fear and dismay and began to mount their steeds. In a few moments the three men were left alone. Even the Princess fled, moved from her usual calm and self-possession. To leave the meadow it was necessary to cross a foaming mountain torrent by a frail pinewood bridge. The Princess, blind with rage, did not look where she was riding. She missed the plank, and she and her horse slipped together into the roaring stream, and a fresh cry of dismay arose from her women.

"The Princess—oh, the Head, the Head!" they shrieked, and at the cry the Prince sprang forward. In a moment he grasped what had happened. The horse had already been whirled away by the fierce current, and the Princess's white robes gleamed from the water as she was hurled along to the horrible falls that lay but a short distance below. There was not a moment to be lost, and the Prince, clothed though he was in woman's vesture, sprang in after her.

He caught her by an almost superhuman effort, and then, swimming with one arm while he clasped her in the other, he tried to bring his precious burden to land. The current ran so strongly that he could make no headway against it, and for a few moments it seemed that he would be swept over the falls with the Princess in his arms. But fortunately a broken tree hung out over the river, and as they were borne past the Prince managed to clutch one of its boughs. Then, hand over hand, he pulled himself to the shore, where the Princess's maidens drew them both safe to land.

"She lives—the Princess lives!" they cried joyfully, and carried her tenderly back to the tent, while the Prince, ashamed to meet her opening eyes, and not caring to speak with his friends just then, pushed on alone through the woods back to the college.

The riding-party had already returned when he reached the grounds, and the gates were shut. But, high and formidable though they were, he managed to scale them and dropped to the ground on the farther side. He did not dare to enter the college itself, however, so he paced up and down the grounds in the gathering gloom until, at last, night fell.

Soon after it became dark he heard a step, and a moment after a tall form came into view. For an instant the Prince's heart leapt up with joy, for he hoped that it was the Princess come to seek him. But it was only Florian.

"Hush," Florian whispered, as the Prince gave an eager exclamation. "They seek us everywhere, for it is against the rules to be out so late. Moreover, 'Seize the strangers!' is the cry within. I crept in after the others, unheeded in the confusion, and, unseen by any, I have waited in the great hall, hidden behind a statue. One by one each woman in the place has been called up and questioned. Each girl disclaimed all knowledge of us, save only Melissa. She would not betray us, but could not deny knowing us, and so kept silence, which the Princess, knowing her transparent nature, interpreted for guilt. They sent for Psyche, but she was not there, and then for Lady Blanche, but I, taking advantage of the moment's pause, slipped out to find you. But where are Psyche and Cyril? Both are fled. I wish we had never come on this mad adventure."

Suddenly, as he finished speaking, two proctors sprang upon them calling out "Names?" Florian was seized, but the Prince, more nimble, sprang aside and, taking to his heels, began to run. In and out amongst the bushes he dodged and ran. He was fleet of foot and might have escaped, but laughter and amusement made him careless, and catching his feet in a trailing vine, he tripped and fell. In a moment his pursuers were upon him, and he was seized and recognised. Then he and Florian were hauled ignominiously before the Princess.

Ida was sitting on her throne, her brow black with anger. Her hair was still damp from the stream, and on either side her handmaidens stood combing out the long dark tresses. Behind her stood her bodyguard, eight strong women, daughters of the plough, while all around pressed the crowd of frightened, wondering students. The crowd divided to let the two men pass through, and they were led up to the foot of the throne, where a tense little group was gathered. Melissa knelt at the Princess's feet, her face bowed on her hands, her shoulders shaking with pitiful sobs. Beside her lay the little Aglaia, Lady Psyche's baby girl. The child was curled up sleepily on the purple footcloth, garbed only in her night robe, for she had been caught up hastily from her bed and brought to the great hall by Ida's orders. And in front of the Princess stood the Lady Blanche, who was talking angrily.

"You prized my counsel in the old days, before the Lady Psyche stole your love from me," she said. "But when she came you turned your love to her and froze to me, who had been a second mother to you. This college was my plan. It was I who aided you to form it, whose counsel upheld you through all the difficulties and opposition that met you. And what was my reward? I found that Psyche had taken my place with you. It was to her you turned for counsel, to her you sent the most promising students; it was always her advice you took, not mine. Yet still I bore up in hope, thinking that one day you would know her for what she is.

"And then came these wolves. They knew her, and she knew them, yet she did not tell. I had my suspicions all along, and last night I discovered the truth. I would have come direct to you, but I feared to meet with a cold rebuff, feared that you would think my honest heat was but malignant haste. But to-day, when I found that still she did not tell, I went to you determined to brave your anger for the justice of my cause; but you had ridden to the hills with her and those whom she was sheltering here. For the rest I have heard what happened. These monsters blazoned what they were according to the coarseness of their kind; and, known at last, the Lady Psyche has fled, leaving me to suffer the full force of your anger —I who have lent my life to build up yours, I that have wasted here health, wealth, and talents. Dismiss me if you will, but I prophesy your plan will fail when I am no longer here to guide you."

But the Princess sat unmoved by all the lady's eloquence.

"Go!" she said coldly. "Your oath is broken—go! As for this lost lamb"—she pointed to the baby lying at her feet—"it was our intention to cast it out also, but now our mind is changed. We take it to ourself."

Lady Blanche laid her hand roughly on Melissa's shoulder and dragged her to her feet.

"Come," she said, and Melissa, casting one last imploring look at Ida, which would have moved any heart less stony than the heart of the Princess, turned to go. Florian gave an exclamation of pity as he watched the grief-stricken girl, but before he could move or speak on her behalf the door was thrown open, and a messenger, a woman-post, rushed in, her face white with fear. Breathless with haste, she fell on her knees before the Princess and delivered a sealed packet into her hands.

Ida took the packet in amazement and tore it open. It contained two letters, and as she read them the Prince watched her closely, wondering what the angry flush which spread over her brow and cheek and bosom might mean. Her hand shook and her breast heaved as though with some great passion. She tried to speak, but utterance failed her, and turning abruptly to the Prince she flung the letters to him.

"Read," she said. And the Prince, stooping down and picking up the letters, read. The first was from her father.

"Fair daughter" (it ran), "when we sent the Prince your way
We knew not your ungracious laws, which learnt,
We, conscious of what temper you are built,
Came all in haste to hinder wrong, but fell
Into his father's hands, who has this night,
You lying close upon his territory,
Slipt round and in the dark invested you,
And here he keeps me hostage for his son."

The second letter was from the Prince's father, and ran thus:

"You have our son: touch not a hair of his head:
Render him up unscathed: give him your hand:
Cleave to your contract: tho' indeed we hear
You hold the woman is the better man;
A rampant heresy, such as if it spread
Would make all women kick against their lords
Thro' all the world, and which might well deserve
That we this night should pluck your palace down;
And we will do it, unless you send us back
Our son, on the instant, whole."

The Prince read thus far, and then he looked up and spoke impetuously:

"Indeed it was not to pry on your reserve that I came hither—it was in the hope that I might win you for my own. I have dreamt of you, longed for you, loved you ever since I was a boy, and I cannot cease to desire you, even though you slay me here according to your cruel law. And I did not come here wholly unauthorised—behold your father's letter."

He dropped on his knees and gave the letter into the Princess's hand. But Ida, in a whirlwind of passion, caught it up and tore it across and across and flung the pieces, unread, at her feet. Then she burst into a torrent of bitter words.

"Oh, you have done well—well!" she cried. "You have acted like a gentleman and like a prince! You have our thanks for all! You look well too in your woman's dress! You saved my life, but I would sooner have died than owe my life to you. *I* wed with you! Though you were lord of all the world, I would not be your bride. Your offer and yourself are hateful to me—I will not look upon you more!"

She turned to her bodyguard of women.

"Here, push them out of doors," she cried; and at her word those eight strong daughters of the plough came forward and seized the Prince and Florian. The Prince struggled to free himself and speak, but he was powerless in those mighty hands, and amidst the mocking laughter of the surrounding women he and Florian were borne across the hall and down the steps and pushed outside the gates.

The heavy doors clanged-to behind them, and, shamed and humiliated, they crossed the street and moved away from the scene of their disgrace. They had, however, scarcely gone three steps when a sentry's voice rang out in challenge:

"Who goes there?"

It was the outposts of the army the Prince's father had brought to rescue his son, and in a few minutes more the two stood in the royal presence, where the King sat with Gama, his captive guest, and his barons and captains and mighty men of war. A great outburst of laughter arose at the sight of the Prince and Florian in their bedraggled female clothing, and many were the jests and gibes the two had to bear. The two kings especially enjoyed the joke, now that they knew that the Prince was safe, and as soon as he could speak for laughing the King turned to his captive.

"King, you are free," he said, still chuckling. "We did but keep you surety for our son." Then he turned to the Prince.

"Go and make yourself a man to fight with men," he roared; and the Prince and Florian slunk away.

Outside the King's tent they learnt that Cyril and Psyche were safe within the camp. Cyril had found Psyche weeping, and had taken her with him to the King, since she dared not return to Ida. She was lying in a tent close by, moaning and crying for her child, her little Aglaia, whom she feared that she would never see again. When Florian and the Prince had changed their clothes they went with Cyril to the tent where she was lying, and did their best to comfort her. But she would not be comforted, even though Cyril vowed on his honour to bring her back her child. While they were still with the poor woman, trying in vain to console her, a rumour ran through the camp that Arac, Ida's favourite brother, had come with another army to rescue his father, and the three men were obliged to leave Psyche to the care of the women in whose charge she had been placed, and hasten back to the King's tent.

They found that a council of war was taking place there. The Prince's father was loud in his demands that the contract made so long ago between his son and Ida should be fulfilled. But when the Prince entered Gama turned to him.

"I fear you spent a stormy time with our strange girl," he said, "and yet they tell me that you love her still? I cannot compel her to obedience. If you would win her you must fight for her in truth. What say you; do you still desire her? Is it to be peace or war?"

"Not war, if it be possible to prevent it, sir," said the Prince. "She would hate me even more than she does now—and with reason. It is her love that I desire, and she would not love me if she were brought to me in chains. Not war, sir, whatever may befall!"

"Tut, tut, boy! You know not what you say," cried the Prince's father roughly. "Man is the hunter, woman is his game—and there is nothing in all the world so dear to them as he who does the thing they dare not do. Dash in and win her, boy! Take her by force. 'Twas so I won your mother."

"Nay, sir, Ida is not so. She must be won with wiser curbs," answered the Prince. "Ida would not prize the soldier, for there is nothing in the world she dare not do herself. Not war, I pray you—lest I lose all."

King Gama turned to his host, who was growling surlily at his son's reply.

"The boy says well," he said. "He seems a gracious and a gallant Prince. I would he had our daughter. Let him ride back with me to Arac's lines and talk with Arac. Perhaps between us we may build some plan."

The old King was loath to let his son go. He would rather have made war at once, and plucked the Princess—a wilful, spoilt child, he called her—from her nest by force. But at last he gave a reluctant consent to the Prince's pleadings; and so the Prince and King Gama, accompanied by Florian and Cyril, rode away from the camp to the place where Arac had halted his army.

King Gama's three sons rode out to meet their father as he approached his own lines in the early morning. They were three great, strong men, but Arac was the strongest of them all. The Prince thought that there was a look of Ida about him, and he took an immediate liking for the great, powerful fellow.

Arac lost no time in coming to the point.

"We must settle up this question of your troth," he said to the Prince. "Ida flies too high, but, right or wrong, I stand upon her side. She made me swear it by candlelight by some saint or other. I forget the name—but still I swore. She will not marry you. You must waive your claim to her hand, or else the foughten field must decide it, whether my father wills it or no."

The Prince did not answer for a moment or two. He felt he could not give up all hope of gaining Ida for his bride some day, and yet he hesitated to declare for senseless war. While he hesitated one of Ida's brothers said in a sneering tone:

"Like to like, I see. The woman's garment hid a woman's heart!"

The taunt fired the Prince, and he answered sharply:

"Let war decide it then, here and now! We are three to three."

"Three to three!" cried the third brother. "And our sister's honour involved in the quarrel! Nay, for honour's sake, there must be fifty on a side, at least, if the question is to be settled that way."

"As you will," said the Prince rather bitterly. "It will have to be for honour, if at all, since if we fail we fail, and if we win we still fail, for she will not keep her compact, whatever may betide."

"Nay, then, but she shall," cried Arac with an oath. "We will send to her mighty reasons why she should keep her compact. I will send to her now, and you shall have her answer before we fight."

Gama cried out in dismay when he understood what his sons had arranged to do, but they paid no heed to his protestations, and since there seemed no more to say the Prince and his two friends rode back to their own camp and broke the news of the forthcoming battle to the Prince's father. The poor old King was overcome with grief and anger when he heard what his son intended to do. He swore that he would not allow him to tilt in the tourney. He himself, old though he was, would take his place, he said. His life was of less value than his heir's. But his lords and captains convinced him that this was impossible, and he was obliged to let his son fight as it was arranged. Then the captains and knights drew lots as to which of them should have the honour of taking part in the battle. The lists were made up, and all that morning heralds rode backwards and forwards between the two camps. Towards noon a letter from Arac was brought to the Prince. It contained Ida's answer to her brother's letter, and the Prince read her words with a beating heart.

Ida promised to abide by the result of the battle, whatever might befall.

"I will abide the end, whatever it may be," she wrote. "But you will not fail, I know you will not fail. Fight, and fight well, but do not take his life. He risked it for my own, and his mother lives to grieve for him. I would not have you harm him!"

The Prince's heart leapt up as he read those words. "Take not his life." Was it possible that the Princess cared for him a little, however small that care might be? Heartened up by the letter, he went to the king and bade him farewell; then he and his knights-at-arms rode out to the place where the tournament was to be held.

For many hours the battle raged fiercely. The knights on either side fought well and bravely, and many were the deeds of valour performed that day. All the soldiers from the two camps had gathered together to watch the mighty fray, and from the battlements of the college, Ida, surrounded by her women, stood and watched the issue of the day. In her arms she held little Aglaia, Psyche's baby girl, whom the Princess intended to adopt as her own child.

To the Prince all the battle seemed like a dream. Men around him fell and rose, and fell and rose again. He and Arac, the giant of his side, met and fought together all the while, each seeking the other as his worthiest adversary. The Prince fought with great skill and bravery, but he was like a child beside his giant opponent, and at the last he was overborne. Then there arose a great cry from all around:

"The Prince is slain, the Prince is slain!" And at the same instant the trumpets blew and the tournament was stopped.

The old King ran in amongst the knights and flung himself upon his son's body, crying out with grief, while the Lady Psyche, who had been standing at his side all through the battle, followed him on to the field. She was still half dazed by grief for her little lost Aglaia and was scarcely conscious of what she was doing.

Ida, seeing that the fight was over, descended from the roof, and with Psyche's baby still clasped in her arms, she led her maidens across the plain until she came to the place where her brothers lay on the battlefield, all wounded, though not very grievously. She pressed their hands and thanked them for their aid. They and their knights should be taken to the college and nursed back to health and strength again, she told them. Then she came to where the Prince was lying, and when she saw his still, white face, and his grief-stricken father bending over him, a sigh broke from her. A shadow passed over her face and she turned a little pale.

"He saved my life: my brother slew him for it," she said, hardly knowing that she spoke the words aloud.

The old King heard her. Silently he drew from the Prince's neck the little picture and the lock of hair which he had always worn. And as the Princess gazed at them she knew that the Prince had really spoken the truth when he said that he loved her and had not merely been paying her empty compliments, and a pang of remorse and pity shot through her heart. Her iron will began to soften, and setting little Aglaia on the ground she knelt down beside the Prince, laying her hand gently on his brow.

"Sire, he is not dead," she said. "He still lives. Let me have him with my brothers here in my own palace. We will nurse him back to life."

At those words, "He lives," the King was filled with new hope. He and Ida bent together over the Prince's body, and the dark hair of the Princess and the grey locks of the old man were mingled as they knelt side by side.

Psyche, who had been standing quietly by, had never taken her eyes from Aglaia since Ida had brought her on the scene, and now she began to steal silently towards the little one.

"Mine, mine! She is not yours, she is mine!" she cried out suddenly. "Give me my child!" and she stretched out her arms imploringly towards her baby.

Ida turned to look at her, pride and scorn flashing from her dark eyes. But Psyche heeded not her wrath. Kneeling before her, she begged with open arms that her baby might be given back to her. Cyril, who was lying close by, wounded, too, raised himself on his elbow and added his entreaties to the poor mother's. Ida was more moved by the events of the day than she would admit, and she could not resist the appeal from the wounded man. She took the child up in her arms and laid it in Cyril's hands.

"Take it, sir," she said gently, and Cyril turned towards Psyche, who sprang forward with cries of joy and pressed her little one closely in her arms, shedding tears of happiness, and uttering little tender words of mother love. Then, when she had assured herself that her child was safe and well, Psyche turned to the Princess once more and begged for her forgiveness.

"Say one soft word to me before I go," she said, but Ida turned away and would not speak.

Then Arac, who was lying close by, spoke to his sister roughly.

" Upon my faith," he cried, " you blame men for ill-using you, but it is you who wrong yourselves. It is the woman who is hard upon the woman! Come, I am your warrior, I and mine have fought your battle—grant a grace to me. Take her hand and kiss her ere she goes."

But Ida fixed her eyes stubbornly upon the ground and would not say a word. Her father came and pleaded with her, but it was all in vain. Not one kind word would she say to poor weeping Psyche.

At last the Prince's father rose and spoke indignantly.

" You half fooled me into letting you have my son to nurse," he said. " I thought he might have wished it so himself, but you are so hard I will not risk it. I think the rougher hand of man will be the safer." And he summoned his stretcher-bearers imperiously.

" Take up the Prince and carry him to his tent," he commanded.

But Ida suddenly turned and held out her arms to her erstwhile friend.

" Oh, Psyche, come hither, embrace me quick," she cried. " Make reconciliation sure with one that cannot keep her mind an hour! Kiss and be friends—I want forgiveness, too."

She embraced Psyche tenderly; then she turned to the old King.

" Let me have your son," she pleaded. " I will nurse him and wait upon him like my own brother." And the King yielded to her entreaties and gave orders that the Prince was to be carried into Ida's palace.

Then the college, which had been for so long barred to men, was thrown open as a great hospital. All the wounded men from either side were carried in, and the girl students turned their gentle hands to dressing wounds and tending the sick. Melissa took Florian under her special charge. Psyche divided her attentions between her little one and Cyril, who had indeed done as he had promised and given her baby back to her again, since it was from his hands that she had received Aglaia. Ida herself waited upon the Prince, who was the most seriously wounded of all the combatants. Indeed it seemed that he was too seriously injured ever to recover, and for a time all feared that he would die.

But he did not die. One night, as Ida was watching beside him, he seemed to recover consciousness a little. He fixed his eyes upon the Princess, and as she bent towards him to hear what he would say he whispered faintly:

"If you are Ida, indeed I ask you nothing. But if you be, as I think, some sweet dream, I pray you to fulfil yourself. Stoop down and seem to kiss me ere I die!"

The Princess hesitated a moment, held back by her pride. Then suddenly all her old hard self slipped from her, and she realised that she loved this man with all her heart and soul. With a low cry she stooped towards him and let him clasp her in his arms, while her lips met his in one passionate kiss.

And whether it was that her kiss saved the Prince, or whether he would have recovered any way, the fact remains that from that hour he gradually recovered strength until at last he was pronounced to be out of danger.

This is nearly the end of the story. Florian married Melissa, Cyril married Psyche, and the Prince's wooing, which had been so rough and stormy, went well from that time onward, though Ida demurred a little when he asked her to be his wife.

"You cannot really love me," she said tremulously. But the Prince looked up at her with shining eyes, and said tenderly and reverently:

> "Indeed I love thee. Come,
> Yield thyself up: my hopes and thine are one.
> Accomplish thou my manhood and thyself;
> Lay thy sweet hands in mine and trust to me."

And the Princess, laying aside her pride and wilfulness, stooped down and laid her hands in his.

Young Lochinvar

O young Lochinvar is come out of the West!
Through all the wide Border his steed is the best;
  And save his good broadsword he weapon had none;
  He rode all unarmed and he rode all alone.
So faithful in love, and so dauntless in war,
There never was knight like the young Lochinvar!

BUT everybody did not think so! The father and mother of the lady whom the young knight loved thought that there were a great many gentlemen preferable as suitors for their daughter. And though Lord Lochinvar had wooed his fair Ellen for many a long day, yet they would have nothing to do with him. Sternly Ellen's father refused the young man's suit; and at last. in order to make sure that his daughter should not marry him, he betrothed her to another gentleman of his acquaintance, who, however desirable he might have been in her parents' eyes, seemed to Ellen a very poor lover after young Lochinvar. But in those days a maiden had very little say in the choosing of her husband. If she did not approve of her father's choice her parent was quite at liberty to lock her up in a dungeon and starve her into submission, and however rebellious a daughter might be at first, she usually gave in after a few weeks' imprisonment on bread and water!

Young Lord Lochinvar was far away from Netherby

Hall, the home of fair Ellen, when he heard the news of her betrothal; but, having heard it, he did not linger long. For the report said that Ellen was to be married at once to her future husband, whether she would or no, and young Lochinvar was not the man to stand idly by and let his love be taken from him. If Ellen had really forgotten him, if she had ceased to love him, and really wished to marry this new suitor of hers, Lord Lochinvar had no wish to carry off a maiden against her will, and he would let her go. But if she was being forced into this marriage with a man who was neither brave nor handsome—why, then, maybe Lord Lochinvar might have something to say about it! And armed only with his broadsword, he bridled his horse and sprang to the saddle, and started off at once for the home of his ladylove.

On and on he rode, caring not for stone nor thicket, stopping not for any obstacle. He swam his horse through the Esk river where ford there was none, and never drew rein until he alighted at the gate of Netherby Hall. And he was not a moment too soon. Ellen had yielded at last to her parents' stern commands, and even as Lord Lochinvar sprang from his charger, her craven bridegroom was waiting to lead her to the altar.

Boldly young Lochinvar forced his way into the hall, where the whole Netherby clan was gathered for Ellen's wedding. The poor bridegroom said never a word as his bride's discarded suitor pressed towards him through the crowd of wedding guests. He was cowardly and nervous, and he did not like the look of young Lochinvar at all. He stayed behind in the background, and it was left to Ellen's father to come forward and demand of this uninvited guest the reason for his presence.

"Come ye in peace here, or come ye in war, or to dance at our bridal, young Lord Lochinvar?" asked the bride's father, with his hand on his sword, and he tried to bar the way in front of the young man. Lord Lochinvar's fame as a reckless and fearless young gallant was spread abroad, and there was no knowing what his intentions might be.

But Lochinvar had a deep-laid scheme in his mind, and he had no desire to provoke a quarrel thus early in the proceedings. So he answered the question evasively.

"Long have I wooed your daughter," he said, "but you have denied my suit, and though love may swell like the Solway, yet it will sometimes ebb like its tide. I have come to lead but one measure, to drink but one cup of wine with my lost love. There are maidens in Scotland, as lovely even as Ellen, who would gladly be bride to Lord Lochinvar!" And he flung his head back proudly, and glanced round the hall with a scornful smile.

The bride's father looked doubtfully at his visitor. He did not wish to anger him more than was needful. Lord Lochinvar was rather a terrible person when his anger was aroused, and as it seemed as though he had come out of mere reckless bravado he thought it best to humour the young man. He signed to his daughter to bring the cup of wine, and tremblingly Ellen came forward, bearing the goblet in her hands. Before she gave it to her old lover she raised it to her own lips and kissed it, as was the custom in those days when offering wine to an honoured guest.

Lochinvar took the goblet from her hands, and as he did so, he gazed deep into her eyes with a look which made Ellen blush and sigh and cast her eyes to the ground, while a tear trembled on her long lashes. The young knight drank the wine and flung down the cup, then, before the bride's mother, who was hovering anxiously near, could intervene, he took the maiden's soft hand in his.

"Now tread we a measure," said young Lochinvar.

He was so tall and manly and stately, and she was so lovely and sweet and graceful, that never before had such a handsome couple danced together in that old castle hall. The bride's father stood by fuming, yet not daring to interrupt lest he should provoke a quarrel with his troublesome guest. Ellen's mother stood beside him, watching her daughter uneasily. She, too, wished that the marriage ceremony was safely over, but she could see nothing that she could do at present. As for the bridegroom, he could only stand stupidly by, dangling his bonnet and plume. Much as he hated seeing his bride in the arms of her old lover, he had not the pluck to bid Lord Lochinvar begone about his business, as any man worthy of the name would surely have done. And the bridesmaids, who stood together in a little whispering group at one end of the hall, watched the dancers admiringly, and said amongst themselves:

"'Twere better by far to have matched our fair cousin with young Lochinvar!"

On and on the couple danced, and now they had reached the far end of the long hall. The door stood open. Just outside was Lochinvar's charger, waiting patiently for his master's return. Lord Lochinvar looked down once more, deep into Ellen's eyes, and what he saw there satisfied him. She was not marrying for love the craven bridegroom who could stand by and see his bride in the

"'They'll have fleet steeds that follow!' cried young Lochinvar."

arms of another man on her wedding morning. What love she had to give was still for him, who had loved her so tenderly and truly, and who was willing to lay down his life for her sake, if need be.

One touch of her hand, one quick whispered word in her ear, and then, before the startled guests could interfere, before the dull-witted bridegroom could even realise what was happening, young Lochinvar had caught Ellen up in his arms, and had sprung with her across the threshold of the hall. Lightly he swung his fair burden on to the horse's back—lightly he sprang to the saddle in front of her.

"She is won! We are gone—over bank, bush and scaur! They'll have fleet steeds that follow!" cried young Lochinvar.

There was shouting and confusion, and bustling and hurrying that day in Netherby Hall! Horses were hastily saddled and bridled, and guests who had come to witness a wedding ceremony mounted their steeds and gave chase to a runaway bride. They rode and rode, and scoured the countryside for miles around, but it was all in vain! None could ride so fast and well as young Lochinvar, and before night fell he was safe in his own country with the maiden he had won so gallantly for his bride.

So daring in love, and so dauntless in war,
Have ye e'er heard of gallant like young Lochinvar?

Enoch Arden

MORE than a hundred years ago three children played together on the beach of a little fishing town. One was Annie Lee, the prettiest little damsel in the port; one was the rich miller's only son, Philip Ray; and the other was Enoch Arden, a brown-faced, sturdy, masterful little fellow, the orphan child of a rough, seafaring man.

A narrow cave ran in beneath the cliff on the beach, and in this the children played at housekeeping. Annie was mistress, and Enoch and Philip took it in turns to be master. Sometimes the two boys would quarrel about their turns, and when this happened Enoch, always the stronger, would get the better of it.

"This is my house, and Annie is my little wife," he would cry, and Philip, his blue eyes full of angry tears, would shriek out:

"I hate you, Enoch!" Then the little housewife, a loving, peaceable little soul, would weep for company and beg them not to quarrel.

"I will be wife to both of you," she would say persuasively, and so, for the time being, the feud would be healed.

Time passed on, and as the two lads grew to manhood each fixed his love upon Annie Lee. But it was Enoch whom Annie loved the best, though she was always kind and gentle to Philip, who was shy and reserved and never dared to give expression to his feelings for the girl. And Enoch felt that Annie loved him. Made strong by hope, he worked hard and saved his earnings until he had enough money to buy himself a boat and make a home for Annie, a neat little, nest-like cottage, half way up the narrow, straggling street that climbed towards the mill.

One golden autumn evening all the young people of the village had gone nutting to the hazel woods that lay behind the town. Philip's father was sick, and Philip stayed behind a little later than the others to tend to him. And when at last he was able to leave him and go after the nutting party he came unexpectedly across Enoch and Annie, sitting hand in hand in lover-like attitude. They were too absorbed in each other to notice the intruder, and with a groan Philip slipped away. He had always feared that Annie loved Enoch, and now he knew for certain, and, creeping into a dark hollow of the wood, he flung himself face downwards on the ground. The hour he spent by himself was a very bitter one. But he was brave at heart, and when he arose and returned home, outwardly he had conquered all traces of his sorrow, though in his breast he carried a bitter longing unguessed and undreamt of by those around him. Yet he did not break his friendship with Enoch and Annie, and when at length the lovers were wed he was the first to wish them happiness.

For seven long years happiness lived and reigned supreme in the little fishing cottage. Husband and wife loved each other dearly, and their love was made stronger and more enduring by the birth of two little ones, first a daughter, then a son. Enoch's trade prospered as well as his love, and he put his savings by with a double sense of their importance now that he had his children's future to look to. He was determined to save enough money to send them to school when they were old enough, and so give them a better bringing-up than he had ever had.

But this good fortune was not to last for ever. One day Enoch had a bad accident. He slipped and fell from the mast of a ship which was lying at anchor in a harbour town a few miles distant, breaking a limb in the fall. While he was lying helpless away from home his wife bore him another son, a little, sickly, delicate baby, and so a further inroad was made upon his savings. Then—for misfortunes never come singly—another man set up a fishing boat in the village and snatched away some of his trade; so it was no wonder that Enoch, lying ill and helpless so far from his home and dear ones, grew a little gloomy and miserable. The outlook was so dark that it was enough to make the most hopeful man a little gloomy.

But Enoch was a God-fearing man, and in his hour of darkness and doubt he did not forget to pray for help and guidance. And even as he prayed it seemed as though his prayer was answered. The master of the vessel on which Enoch had met with his accident came to see him, and offered him the place of boatswain on his ship. The boat was bound for China in a few weeks' time, and, knowing Enoch to be an upright man and a clever sailor, the captain begged him to sign on with him for that one voyage at least.

Enoch took the man's coming as an answer to his prayer, and gratefully accepted the offer. It would mean good money to him, and after he had made one or two voyages he would have saved enough to make the future sufficiently sure for his wife and children.

As soon as he was well he hastened back to his home. Annie was up and about again, though she was still weak and delicate. It was the first time Enoch had seen his little son, and he took the sickly, puny baby tenderly into his arms, fondling him and praising him, and cheering his wife's anxious forebodings about the delicate child. He had not the heart to tell her of his purpose that first night at home; but the next morning he broke the news as gently as he could, and told her of the plans he had made for her while he was away. He had determined to sell his boat and his fishing-tackle, and with the purchase money to buy enough goods and stores to set Annie up in a little shop of her own. It would not be for long, he told her cheerfully. If he made one or two prosperous voyages he would have earned enough money to buy a bigger and better boat; and then he could settle down in his native town, and bring up his children in peace and comfort.

Poor Annie wept bitterly when she heard of Enoch's coming departure, and did all she could to persuade him not to go. But Enoch had made up his mind, and when once he had made up his mind it was difficult to turn him from his purpose. He could not bear the thought of Annie's ever coming to want; and it seemed to him that if he stayed on in this little town, with his trade diminishing day by day, they would be very poor indeed before many months had passed. So he stuck to his determination, and made his preparations for sailing on the appointed day.

The little sitting-room that looked out upon the street he fitted up as a store for Annie; and right up to the very last day he was working at it, fitting and hammering the shelves, and packing away the goods that he had bought. It was late at night when he ascended at last to his little bedroom; and he slept heavily till dawn, for he was tired out with the work of the last few days.

At last came the sorrowful moment of farewell. Annie never knew afterwards how she bore herself through that terrible morning. She had a presentiment that she would never see Enoch's face again; but when she clung to him, weeping and trembling, and told him of her fears, he laughed at her gently, and told her to borrow a spyglass from a neighbour and watch at her window at a certain time a few days hence.

"The ship I sail on will pass by here," he said. "We shall come close in to shore, and you may be sure that I shall come on deck. Look out for me and see my face again, and then you may laugh at all your fears."

Then in a graver voice he said tenderly:

"Annie, my girl, cheer up. I must go, but you will keep everything ship-shape till I come again. You need not fear for me—or, if you fear, cast your care upon God. The sea is His, and He made it, you know. Wherever I go, I cannot go from Him."

Then he embraced his little ones and kissed them good-bye; but when Annie would have awakened the babe, who was sleeping now after a restless, wakeful night, he stayed her.

"Do not wake him," he said. "He is too young to remember me," and he stooped down and kissed the little fellow in his cot as he lay asleep. And Annie clipped a tiny curl from her baby's forehead and gave it to her husband. Enoch cast his strong arms about his grieving wife and held her closely to him for a moment. Then he hastily caught up his bundle, waved his hand, and went his way.

When the day came for Enoch's ship to pass Annie borrowed a glass and watched for him. But it was all in vain. Perhaps her eyes were too dimmed with tears to see, or her hand too tremulous to hold the glass steady. But, however it was, she saw him not, and while Enoch stood on the deck waving, the moment passed, and the vessel was swept away from her sight.

Then began a time for Annie of loneliness and waiting. The little shop did not prosper as it should have done. She was too shy and gentle to barter her stores successfully, and often she sold her goods below their cost price. For some years she gained a scanty sustenance for herself and her children; but gradually she began to realise that she would never be able to make the shop pay. Day by day she became poorer and poorer; and as still no news came from Enoch her heart grew heavier and heavier, and the future loomed very dark and gloomy before her anxious eyes.

And now, to add to her troubles, the third child, sickly from its birth, began to grow sicklier. Annie cared for it with all a mother's love, but her efforts were of no use. The little one grew ever weaker, until at last, almost before she was aware of it, this child had faded away and died.

Philip had not looked upon Annie's face since Enoch had gone. His love for her had grown stronger with the years, and he felt that he could not bear to look upon her because of the mad desire and longing that arose in his heart whenever he saw her sweet face. But now, in her grief for her lost baby, he felt that it would be unkind to stop away any longer; and so, a few days after the little one was buried, he went to the tiny shop, and, passing through it, stopped to knock at the door of the inner room.

No one answered his knock, and opening the door very gently he stepped inside. Annie was sitting there, weeping bitterly, with her face bowed in her hands. Philip scarcely knew what to do or say to comfort her; but he sat down beside her and tried to soothe her grief.

"I have come to talk to you of Enoch," he said gently, "and of what I know he wished. You knew why he went away and left you lonely. It was not for pleasure, or because he wanted to see the world. It was because he wished to make the wherewithal to give his little ones a better bringing-up than his has been. When he comes again he will be vexed to think that so much precious time has been lost. Even in his grave it would grieve him to know that his children were running wild for want of teaching. So, Annie—we have known each other all our lives, so surely I may ask you this. I am rich and well-to-do, and I beg you, for the love you bear Enoch and his children, to let me put the boy and girl to school. Enoch shall repay me when he comes again, if you wish it."

Annie turned her face away, for his kindness overwhelmed her.

"I cannot look you in the face. I seem so foolish and upset," she answered brokenly. "When you came in, my sorrow broke me down, and now your kindness breaks me down. Enoch lives, I know that Enoch lives—and when he comes again he will repay you. That is, he will repay you the money—kindness such as yours can never be repaid."

"Then you will let me, Annie?" said Philip; and Annie lifted her face to his for a reply and turned her swimming eyes upon him. Then she caught his hand, wringing it passionately, and calling down a blessing upon his head, she left the little room. And Philip left the cottage happier than he had been for many a day.

So Philip put the boy and girl to school, bought them all the books they needed, and in every possible way made himself their guardian. He would not call much upon Annie, for he feared to make her the talk of the gossiping little port; but he showered down kindnesses upon her children, and often sent her gifts by them—fruit and flowers from his garden, rabbits and game from the down, and sometimes, on pretext of its being especially finely ground, a bag of flour from the mill. The two children grew to love Philip dearly. "Father Philip," they called him, and were as much at home in his house as in their own. Whenever they saw him coming they would run to meet him with cries of joy. Enoch appeared to them only a shadowy vision now. They were so young when he went away that they could hardly remember him. No news or word had come from him since the day that he left, and Annie, full of fears for his safety, could hardly bear to speak of him even to her children, and so the remembrance of him died away in their hearts.

So ten long years passed by, ten years of anxious waiting for Annie, during which no sign or letter came from Enoch. Annie was beginning to lose heart at last. It seemed almost certain that his ship must have been lost, and yet something seemed to tell her that he was still alive. Her neighbours had long since given up hope for him, and Philip, too, although he tried not to think it, could not help feeling sure that Enoch must be dead. And one day, when he had taken Annie and the two children he had virtually adopted to the woods nutting, he spoke to Annie and told her what he thought.

It was seldom that Annie went on these expeditions with her children, but to-day they had persuaded her to do so, since it was such a beautiful autumn afternoon. But she soon grew tired, and while the children went farther into the woods to search for nuts, she and Philip sat down on a fallen tree to rest. For a little while there was silence between them, and then at last Philip's heart overflowed at the sight of the pale, sad face of the woman he loved, and he burst out into passionate speech.

" Why should you kill yourself and make them doubly orphans? " he cried. " The ship is lost. It is beyond all hope, against all chance, that Enoch, who left you ten long years ago, should still be living. Let me speak, Annie. I grieve to see you poor and wanting help; and yet I cannot help you as I wish, unless—unless—— Perhaps you know what I would say; women are so quick at these things. Annie, I want you for my wife. Let me be a father to your children. They love me as a father, and I love them as though they were my own. I believe that if you were my wife I could make you happy. Think about it, Annie. I am rich, and we have known each other all our lives, and I have loved you longer than you know."

Annie turned to him and answered him slowly and tenderly.

" You have been as God's good angel in our house," she said gently. " God bless you for it and reward you with a wife who will be happier than myself. I can never love you as I loved Enoch."

" I am content to be loved a little after Enoch," Philip said wistfully, and Annie gave a little cry, half of terror, half of sorrow.

"Oh, wait a little longer," she said pleadingly. "If Enoch comes—but Enoch will not come! Yet, dear Philip, wait a year. A year is not so long—oh, Philip, wait a year."

"As I have waited all my life," said Philip sadly, "I may well wait a little longer."

"You have my promise," cried Annie. "I am bound. If Enoch comes not in a year I will marry you. You have my promise; will you not bide a year?"

And Philip answered gravely:

"I will bide my year."

Yet, for he was a gentle, chivalrous gentleman at heart, he would not hold her to her promise. When he parted from her that night at the cottage door he took her hand and held it a moment, saying gently:

"Annie, when I spoke to you just now it was your hour of weakness, and I was wrong to take advantage of you. I am always bound to you, but you are not bound to me—you are free." But Annie, honourable too, would not thus accept her freedom.

"I *am* bound," she answered, the tears coming once more into her eyes. "Come to me in a year." And in a year Philip came.

"Is it a year?" she asked unbelievingly, shrinking away from him slightly. It seemed to her that never had a year sped so fast. Philip looked at her wistfully, and his voice was grave as he answered:

"Yes, it is a year. The nuts be ripe once more. Come and see."

But Annie begged him to grant her one more month;

and Philip, his eyes full of that lifelong hunger and his voice shaking a little, said bravely:

"Take your own time, Annie, take your own time."

Annie could have wept with pity for him. Yet she held him on delayingly, inventing one excuse after another, till another half-year had passed away. Philip would not press her, would not urge her; but his face grew pale and careworn, and Annie could not help noticing the change in him. Her heart reproached her for keeping him so long in suspense, and yet she could not bring herself to tell him that she would be his wife.

"Oh, if I could but know if Enoch is alive or dead!" she thought despairingly, and worried over the matter night and day.

One night Annie could not sleep, and as she lay tossing restlessly upon her bed she prayed earnestly that God would give her a sign. And then, unable to endure her anxiety any longer, she struck a light and drew the Bible towards her, opening it wide and setting her finger on a text without looking, hoping to find a sign. Then, with an inward prayer for guidance, she looked to see the words upon which she had laid her finger.

"'Under the palm tree,'" she read, and with a moan she closed the book. There was no meaning for her there, she thought, and, putting out the light, she fell into an uneasy sleep. But while she slept she had a dream. She dreamt that she saw Enoch sitting under a palm tree, while overhead shone a sun of exceeding brightness and radiancy.

"He is dead," she thought in her sleep. "He is singing; he is happy. Yonder shines the Sun of Righteousness, and these be the palms which the happy people strewing cried: "Hosanna in the Highest!" And as these thoughts passed through her mind she awoke.

As soon as she was risen she sent for Philip.

"I will wed you," she said. "There is no reason why we should not wed." And Philip caught her to him, saying earnestly:

"Then, for God's sake—for both our sakes—if you will wed me, let it be at once."

So these two were wedded, and the wedding bells rang out merrily in the little fishing-town. But at first, although her lot was now far removed from care and anxiety, Annie was not happy. She could not rid herself of the impression that Enoch was still alive, and that one day he would come back to claim her. Philip was very patient and gentle with her. Gradually he won her trust and confidence, and when at length a little child was born to them Annie grew to love her husband dearly—not quite so tenderly and passionately as she had once loved Enoch, perhaps, but very tenderly and truly all the same.

And so happiness came to the house by the mill.

And where was Enoch?

The ship on which he had sailed, *The Good Fortune*, had a prosperous voyage and reached her distant harbour safely, where Enoch traded and did well for himself. But her homeward voyage was not so prosperous. She was delayed by calms and driven out of her course by storms, and at last she succumbed to one terrible tempest and sank. All on board her perished, saving only Enoch and two others, who clung to a broken spar and were finally cast up on to a desert shore.

There was no lack of food on the island, for such the land proved to be; but it was uninhabited, and as it was far out of the course of passing vessels it seemed as though the castaways would have to stay there for the remainder of their lives. One of the three, a young boy, had been severely hurt in the wreck of *The Good Fortune.* He was unable to move hand or foot, and for five years he lay helpless in the hut the other two men built for him. They could not leave him as long as he was alive, but when at last death released him, and they had buried him, the other two were free to try to make their escape. But Enoch's companion, in trying to fashion a boat from a fallen tree trunk, grew careless of the tropical sun, and fell a victim to sunstroke. Enoch, left alone, was powerless to do anything to escape, and so he lived on in solitude, never seeing a human face or hearing a human voice. Day after day he watched the sun rise in the morning, watched the blaze grow brighter and brighter until noonday, and then saw the great fiery globe decline until it sank out of sight beneath the western waters, while the stars shone out in the sky, themselves paling later before the greater light of the moon. But though he watched constantly, often by night and day, he never saw a sail.

Thoughts of his home and family, thoughts of Annie and his little ones, rose up in his mind, and he longed with a longing unspeakable to be with them again. Once, as he sat waiting and watching, the sound of bells seemed to be borne to his ears. It sounded to him like the chime of the church bells of his own little village pealing as though for a wedding, and at the sound he started up shuddering, through why he did not know. But it was only an illusion, and when the sound had died away he found himself alone as ever upon the beautiful, hateful island. He gave up hope at last of ever seeing his native land again. And then one morning the impossible happened. A ship, driven out of her course by contrary winds, dropped anchor by the island, and sent a boat ashore for fresh water.

It was so long since Enoch had spoken with anyone that he had almost forgotten the human language. But as the seamen crowded round him—a shaggy-haired, scarcely human-looking figure—the knowledge of his speech came back, and he managed to make them understand. The seamen took him on board their ship and gave him clothing, and he told his story in broken, halting speech at first, but afterwards with more eloquence as the words and phrases came back to his memory. The crew were very kind to him after their rough fashion, but they did not come from his part of the country, and none could tell him the things he most longed to know.

It seemed to Enoch as though that voyage would never come to an end, but it did at last, and one afternoon in late autumn the ship put in at the very harbour from which he had begun that fateful journey so many years ago and landed him upon the shores of his own country once again. Before they put him ashore the officers and men, full of pity for the poor castaway who might find neither home nor friends after his long absence, made up a sum of money between them and gave it to him, and Enoch accepted it gratefully, for he too dreaded what the future might bring.

After he was put ashore Enoch spoke no word to anybody, but set out at once to walk to his own town, to his home—if he still had a home! The afternoon, though chilly, was bright at first, but as the traveller drew near to the little fishing port a haze rolled up from the sea and it began to drizzle with rain, a drizzle that grew thicker as he neared his own town. Enoch walked quickly until he reached the narrow winding street where his home stood. But then his footsteps faltered and hesitated. A great foreboding of calamity fell upon his heart, and he crept slowly along until he reached the little cottage where he and Annie had been so happy during those first years of his married life. And there—it seemed as though in confirmation of his fears—no welcoming light shone out to meet him, there was no answering voice to greet him when he called. The little home stood bare and desolate, with a bill of sale posted in the empty window. Enoch turned away with a sudden chilliness round his heart.

"They are dead," he thought; and he crept slowly down to the wharf, to a little humble tavern that he knew of.

The landlord who had kept the tavern was dead, but his widow, Miriam Lane, managed it, and though it had fallen upon ill days yet there was still a bed for wandering men. Here Arden rested that night, and for many days and nights after; and because he was so changed and worn by hardship Miriam did not recognise him. When he had gone away he had been a tall, strong man in the prime of life; now he was a bent, white-haired, feeble wanderer, grown old long before his time.

Miriam was a talkative person, and very soon Arden had learnt all the news of the little town, including his own story. He heard of the death of his baby, of the struggle Annie had had to make ends meet, of how Philip had come to her rescue and put the children to school, how he had wooed her, so long, so patiently, and how at last, after long years had passed and there seemed no hope of Enoch ever returning, Annie had given a slow and reluctant consent.

What the wanderer must have felt when he heard from the lips of his garrulous landlady of the death of all his hope no one ever knew. No shadow of any emotion passed over his face. Anyone watching him might have thought he felt the tale less than the teller. But when the landlady had gone away a great longing came upon him to see Annie's face again.

"If I might but look upon her once more and know that she is happy!" he cried out to himself; and the longing haunted him until at last, when the dull November evening had settled down upon the little town, he stole out and made his way to the top of the hill on which the mill stood. A light from one of the house windows streamed out into the foggy night, and, allured by it as a bird of passage is allured by the light of a beacon, Enoch went towards it.

Philip's dwelling fronted on the road, but behind it was a little garden, and into this garden Enoch passed. He stole up in the shadow of the wall, and then, sheltered behind a great yew tree, he looked at the scene within the room.

Dainty china cups and burnished silver shone on the table, a cheerful fire was blazing on the hearth, and at one side of the fire Philip was sitting with his baby on his knee. Bending over his chair was a girl, a tall, fair-haired maiden who might have been a later Annie. In her hand she held a length of ribbon from which dangled an ivory ring with which she was tempting the little one. The baby caught at it and missed it, and, crowing with joy, caught at it again, while the girl and her adoptive father laughed heartily at the fun. On the other side of the hearth sat Annie, smiling tenderly at her husband and her baby, and now and again stooping to speak with the sturdy boy who sat on the floor beside her.

When the dead man come to life beheld his wife who was his wife no longer, and saw the babe—hers, yet not his—upon its father's knee, when he saw all the warmth and peace and happiness, and his own children grown so strong and beautiful, and Philip sitting there in his own place, lord of his rights and the undisputed possessor of his children's love, he staggered and shook and clung to the branch of the yew tree for support. Then, in terror lest his emotions should overpower him and he should send out a bitter cry, which in one moment would shatter all the happiness of the woman he loved, he turned and fled, even in his agony remembering to tread softly lest the shingle pathway should grate beneath his feet. But when at last he had reached the garden gate and had closed it behind him, he flung himself face downward upon the ground in the darkness of the night and prayed for strength to keep his secret.

"She must never know—she must never know!" he whispered with dry lips. "Uphold me, Father, in my loneliness! Aid me, give me strength never to let her know!"

He lay for a long time prostrate upon the cold, wet ground, then he rose and tottered back to the inn beside the wharf, while through and through his weary brain hammered the refrain, like the air of a song: "I must not tell her—she must never know."

And he did not tell her. He bore all the pain and loneliness in silence, and no hint of whom he really was ever passed his lips. He was old and broken, too weary to fare forth into the world again, even had he any hope for which to live. So he stayed on at the little tavern with Miriam Lane, and worked amongst the boatmen and fishermen of the port, earning enough money to pay for his board and lodging. He hardly ever spoke to anybody, though once, when his landlady was talking to him again of the old tale, he asked whether the miller's wife did not fear that perhaps after all the first husband might still be alive and should come again one day to claim her.

"Fear it?" said Miriam. "Aye, that she does! If one could tell her he had seen him dead it would indeed be a comfort to her." And Enoch thought to himself:

"When the Lord has taken me she shall know."

So he lived and worked for a little while, but the God in whom he trusted was merciful to him and did not unduly prolong his tortured life. Scarcely a year after he had returned to the little fishing village he sickened and fell ill. He had no definite sickness, but a kind of gentle, weakening languor sapped his life and strength away until at last he could do no more than lie in his bed in the one little room his scanty resources could afford. He bore his weakness cheerfully, for the death that was fast approaching seemed to him as a lifeboat drawing near might have seemed to a crew of shipwrecked souls on board a stranded wreck.

Three days before he died he called Miriam to him.

"I have something to confide in you," he said, "but before I tell you what it is you must swear upon the Book that you will not reveal it till you see me dead." And although Miriam scolded him and told him that of course he was not going to die, his sickness was but a passing weakness, he persisted until at last the good woman, awed into submission by his authoritative tone, did as he asked, and swore solemnly that she would tell no one.

Then Enoch told her who he was and of all the things that had happened to keep him away from his wife during those long, sad years.

Miriam's tears flowed fast as she listened, and she longed to rush out into the town and tell the strange story. But she was bound by her promise, and a promise made upon the Bible was sacred to her, as Enoch had known it would be. She urged Enoch to let her fetch his children, at least, before he died, but Enoch shook his head.

"No," he said; "let me keep my purpose steadfast to the last. But when you see her tell her that I died loving and blessing her as much as when she laid her head beside my own; and tell my son and daughter that I blessed them and prayed for them; and tell Philip that I blessed him too, for he never meant us anything but good."

Then he drew out of his bosom a lock of a baby's hair.

"Take this to her," he said. "She cut it off and gave it to me the morning that I left her, and I have borne it with me all these years, thinking never to part with it. But now my mind is changed. I shall see my baby very soon now, and it may comfort her a little.

Moreover, it will be a token to her that I am really her husband."

Worn out with weakness, he ceased talking, and Miriam poured out a voluble stream of promises. Three nights later, as the good woman watched beside his bed, and the sick man lay sleeping motionless, there came of a sudden so loud a calling of the sea that all the houses in the haven rang with it, and Enoch was awakened. He started up in his bed and, stretching out his arms, cried with a loud voice:

"A sail! A sail! I am saved!" And then fell back and spoke no more.

So this strong heroic soul passed away to wait in peace until at length time should unite him once more to the wife he loved so dearly. Miriam was free now to tell his story, and soon the whole port rang with the news of Enoch Arden's return and the brave silence he had kept for Annie's sake. And when they buried him the little port had seldom seen a costlier funeral.

Abou Ben Adhem and the Angel

ABOU BEN ADHEM lay sleeping in his chamber. He was a good man and very kind to all the people about him, though he was not quite as strict over his spiritual observances as some would have had him be. And although some very religious people might not have approved of him, yet many a poor man counted him as a friend. Many a desolate widow spoke his name in love and gratitude, and many a fatherless child was taught to pray that God would pour down his blessings upon Abou Ben Adhem and his tribe.

Abou Ben Adhem's dreams were pleasant as he lay upon his bed, and when at length he awoke from them a great sense of peace and happiness filled his breast. It was still night-time, and his room was flooded with moonlight—at least, so at first it seemed to Abou Ben Adhem. But as he grew more fully awake he saw that it was not moonlight that was making his room so bright. An angel, clothed in wonderful shining white robes, sat there, and it was from him that this exceeding brightness came.

The angel was writing in a book which he held upon his knee, and Abou Ben Adhem, rendered bold by the deep peace which his happy dreams had brought upon him, raised himself in his bed and said to the presence in his chamber:

"What writest thou?"

The angel raised his head and looked full at Abou Ben Adhem, casting upon him a glance which was at once both serious and tender. Then, with a smile that seemed to make the chamber even lighter than before, he answered gently:

"I write the names of those who love the Lord."

"Is mine one?" asked Abou Ben Adhem. But the angel shook his head.

"Nay, not so," he answered.

Abou Ben Adhem was silent for a few moments while a momentary feeling of sadness drove the happiness from his heart. Then he lifted his head again and smiled and said, still cheerfully, but in a lower tone than before:

"I pray thee, then, write me as one who loves his fellow-men."

The angel wrote and vanished, and Abou Ben Adhem lay down again to sleep, though perhaps not quite so peacefully as before. He could not help feeling a little troubled by the angel's words. Was it really true that he did not love his Lord? Would it be more acceptable to God if he gave less money to the poor and spent more in his religious observances? If he spent less time in visiting his poor friends, in cheering the sad and helping the needy, he would have much more time to give to prayer, if that was really what God would have him do.

He fell asleep again at last, for in spite of the strange thoughts and the doubts and misgivings with which the angel's visit had filled his mind he was not wholly unhappy. He knew that he had acted according to what he honestly believed to be right, and so his conscience could not trouble him very greatly. Still he was a little disturbed, and all the next day he was rather quiet and silent, wondering, perhaps, if he ought to change his way of living, giving more time to his Lord's service and less to the service of his fellow-men.

But the next night, as Abou Ben Adhem lay asleep, the angel came again, surrounded this time by an even more dazzling light, which was so intense that it awoke Abou Ben Adhem from his slumbers. This time the Angel said no word, but in his hand he held a book in which were written the names of those whom God loved. With a wonderful smile the angel opened the book and held the open page out to Abou Ben Adhem, pointing with his finger the while to show that he was to read what was written there. Abou Ben Adhem sat up and bent forward to look, and there on the open page he saw by the brilliant light shed around him his own name written in shining letters at the head of all the rest.

He gazed at his name in that place of honour, scarcely daring to believe that this wonderful thing could be true, that he, Abou Ben Adhem, should be accounted worthy to head the list of the names of those whom God loved. Then he looked up into the angel's face to see if he had read aright. The angel smiled down at him from deep, tender eyes, then once more he vanished from Abou Ben Adhem's sight.

But this time he left behind him peace and joy—joy so great and wonderful that Abou Ben Adhem felt happier than he had ever felt before in all his life. Now he knew that his way of life was right. God had sent His angel to show him that he had not been wrong when he had accounted that love—love of family, love of friend, love of his neighbours, love of his poorer brothers and sisters, love of little children, was the best and surest way of loving and knelt at the lady's feet, offering her his whole-hearted devotion.

The lady smiled at him again and spoke in a strange language that the knight could not understand, but it seemed to him that the words she said could only mean one thing.

"I love thee true," her eyes seemed to tell him; and he was content to take that message without asking any more.

All day long the knight and the lady wandered through the flower-strewn meadows together. When the woman grew weary the knight set her upon his horse, and, walking beside her, he gazed into her wonderful eyes until he was almost intoxicated by them. He gathered the flowers that were growing at his feet and wove a garland for her head; he made a girdle and bracelets from the golden buttercups, and hung them upon her; and the lady laughed and smiled at him and sung him snatches of strange elfin songs which enchanted the young knight's ear. Sometimes they stopped and rested for a while, and then the woman would search for sweet roots and wild honey, which she gave to the knight to eat, and dew for him to drink. And when they had rested and eaten and drunk their fill, the knight would set his lady on his steed again, and they would wander off once more through the summer land. Never a conscious word did they exchange, but the knight was utterly happy with a strange new feeling of happiness such as he had never experienced before. And when the lady leant down from the saddle to sing soft sweet words in his ear, as she would do every now and then, his heart leapt within him, and he longed to ride forth on some hard and dangerous quest for her sake, and felt that he would gladly have done battle for her against the whole world.

As it began to draw towards evening, the lady led her lover to an elfin bower, set deep in the heart of a wood. Then, as she led him into it, she began to weep and sigh, and when he saw her tears the young knight could restrain his love no longer. Catching her in his arms, he kissed her, pressing his lips upon her wonderful sad eyes.

Then the lady ceased her weeping. She sat down on the ground, and making the knight lie beside her with his head on her lap, she lulled him to sleep. The knight was weary and so happy to be with his lady that he feared nothing, and he closed his eyes and fell asleep in perfect contentment, little knowing that it was the last time he would ever so lie down to sleep again. Perhaps if he had seen the strange smile on the lady's beautiful face as she bent over him he might have been warned. But he did not see, and slumber overtook him speedily.

But while he slept a strange and terrible dream came to him. He dreamt that he stood on a cold hill-side, and all around him pressed a great crowd of men—kings, princes and warriors—all pale as death, haggard and woe-begone, with wild, despairing eyes. They stretched out warning hands towards the young knight, crying to him:

"La Belle Dame sans Merci hath thee in thrall!"

Startled by his dream, the young knight awoke and sprang to his feet, his hand upon his sword. He looked round for the lady in whose arms he had sunk to rest, but she was gone. Gone was the elfin grotto, gone was all the pleasant country land through which he had wandered so happily all day. He was alone on a cold hill-side, which looked down upon a dreary lake, from which the very sedge was withered and from the dreary dead margin of which no birds could sing.

And never again did the young knight ride through the land in search of noble quests. Never more did he meet the lady who had bewitched him with her enchantments; but yet he was unable to break away from the spell she had laid upon him. Always, summer and winter alike, he wandered on the hill-side, beside the margin of the dreary lake, pale and haggard like the kings and warriors he had seen in his dream, who were the spirits of brave men whom the fairy woman had enchanted and whose souls she still held in thrall. The knight knew now how false was her fairness, but it was too late to escape from it. He had given his heart to La Belle Dame sans Merci, and now he was doomed to wander for ever, hopelessly and fruitlessly, in search of her.

To those who meet him and ask the reason of his wretchedness he tells his story—how he rode through the meadows that pleasant summer's morning, how he met the fairy woman who enchanted him with her strange elfin song and her wonderful sad eyes, how she took him to her fairy bower, how he yielded at last to her spell and kissed her, and then how he had fallen asleep, to awake on the cold hill-side, lonely and miserable for ever.

> " And this is why I sojourn here,
>   Alone and palely loitering,
> Though the sedge is wither'd from the lake,
>   And no birds sing."

King John and the Abbot of Canterbury

THERE lived in the reign of King John an Abbot of Canterbury who was renowned far and wide for his great riches and the state in which he lived. It chanced that tidings of his wealth and dignity came to the ears of King John, and the king was very indignant indeed to think that a mere abbot should live in such a luxurious manner. He sent post-haste to Canterbury to summon the delinquent to his court in London, and when the abbot arrived he spoke to him with great heat.

"How now, Father Abbot," said the king. "I hear that you keep a far better house than I do. I have heard that you have an hundred men at arms daily about you, and that fifty serving men in velvet coats and golden chains wait upon you hourly. I like not this state, my lord Abbot. I fear me that thou workest treason against my crown."

"Indeed, my liege," said the abbot earnestly, "I spend nothing but what is my own. I trust your grace will not think evil of me for spending of my own true-gotten goods?"

"Nay, Father Abbot, but I do think evil of you," answered the king. "Undoubtedly thou plannest treason against my person; the pomp and state in which you live assures me of it. And for this fault I decree that thou must die."

"Die?" gasped the abbot in dreadful dismay; and the king smiled grimly to see his fear.

"Yes, die," he said. Then, wishing further to torment the poor wretch, he added:

"That is, unless you can answer me three questions. If you can reply to them, mayhap of my royal clemency I will pardon thy misdemeanour; but if thou canst not answer them, then shall thy head be smitten from thy body without more delay. These are the questions: first, you must tell me to one penny what I am worth when I sit here upon my throne with my gold crown upon my head and my liegemen of noble birth about me; secondly, you shall tell me how soon I may ride the whole world about; and the third task is to tell me truly what I do think. Answer me these questions, Father Abbot, and even now shalt thou save thy head."

The poor old abbot trembled exceedingly as the king laughed loudly at his own wit. The poor man knew well that the king had only set these questions to prolong his misery before he died, for there was no man living that could answer them. He knew too that the king did not really suspect him of treachery. John had trumped up this excuse of treason merely in order that he might get rid of the abbot and gain possession of the old man's wealth. Still, the abbot was a brave man, and he determined to make what use he could of the respite offered him. If he could but gain time it would be something.

"These be hard questions for my shallow wit," he said, endeavouring to disguise his fear. "I cannot answer your grace as yet, but if Your Majesty will but give me three weeks in which to think them over I will surely do my best to solve your riddles."

"Well, I will give thee three weeks' space since you ask it," said the king. "But that is the longest time thou hast to live, so look you use it well, Sir Abbot. If at the end of the three weeks thou hast not found an answer to my questions, then shall thy head pay the forfeit, and thy lands and living shall revert to me."

Very sadly the abbot left the king's presence, and mounting his horse, he rode away from the court. He rode to Cambridge and Oxford, and questioned all the wise and learned men who dwelt there, but none of them, for all their vast learning, could devise answers that would be likely to satisfy the king. And at last, when but three days remained of his time of grace the abbot rode back to his home at Canterbury to put his affairs in order and to say good-bye to his friends before he died.

The first person to greet him as he drew near his home was his shepherd, who was driving the sheep to fold. He was overjoyed to see the abbot again, who was beloved by all his servants for his kindness and goodness to them, and he hailed his master delightedly.

"How now, my lord Abbot, you are welcome home indeed!" the man cried, running forward to greet him. "What news do you bring us from good King John?"

"Sad news, my shepherd, sad news indeed!" sighed the abbot. "I have but three more days to live. The king suspects me of treason to his person, and he has decreed that unless I answer him three questions which no man living may answer then shall my head be smitten from my body. And I fear me that the king will keep his word, for it is not the answer to his questions he requires, but my wealth and lands, which, if I am executed for treason, he may seize for his own."

"This is sad news indeed," cried the shepherd, who loved his master dearly. "But what be these questions, sir? Will you not tell me?"

"Truly I will tell thee, good shepherd, as thou desirest to hear them," answered the abbot. "The first is to tell the king, as he sits upon his throne with his golden crown on his head and his liege men about him, what he is worth to one penny. The second is to tell him exactly how long it would take him to ride the whole world about; while the third is to tell him truly what he is thinking of. His Majesty does but jest in order to prolong my misery, for it was never intended that I should find the answers. Indeed, there are no answers that a man might give to such foolish questions."

"Nay, nay, Sir Abbot, be not too sure of that," said the old shepherd cheeringly. "Did ye never hear yet that a fool may sometimes learn a wise man wit? Now if ye will but lend me your horse and your serving-men and your goodly apparel, I will ride to London and answer these questions in your stead. Men say that I am as like your lordship as may well be. Even our very voices sound alike, I have been told; and if you will but lend me your gown I'll warrant there is none in London town shall know us apart."

The abbot shook his head, but the old shepherd persisted that he had thought of a plan to answer the king, and at last his master gave to him an unwilling consent.

"So be it as thou wilt," he said. "Horses and serving-men shalt thou have, and apparel gorgeous enough in which to appear before the Pope. After all, my head is forfeit in any case. Thou canst do me no harm, and mayhap thou mayst do me good. We can but try thy plan, since I have none other of my own."

Then the shepherd was given horses and serving-men, and, arrayed in the abbot's crosier and mitre and rochet and cope and vestments of silk and satin, he set off for London town. And so wonderful was the likeness between him and his master, that when he entered the king's court there were none that even questioned whether he were indeed the abbot.

"Now welcome, my lord Abbot," cried King John. "It is well that you have come back to keep your day. Since thou hast kept troth with me, I will keep troth with thee. If thou canst answer my three questions, thy life and thy living shall both be saved. Now tell me first, as I sit here with my gold crown upon my head and my liege men about me, how much do I be worth?"

The pretended abbot looked the king full in the face and answered him readily enough.

"For thirty pence was our Saviour sold—I think that thou art worth a penny less than He," he said. "Twenty-nine pence, Sir King, is thy price. No man can be worth more than that, since no man can be worth more than the King of Life and Glory; and yet, methinks, with thy gold crown upon thy head, thou canst not well be worth less."

The king laughed loud at the ready answer.

"I did not think I had been worth so little," he said. "Thou hast answered the first question well, my lord Abbot. Now tell me how long it will take me to ride the whole world about?"

"That is soon answered," quoth the shepherd. "You must rise with the sun, and ride with him until he rises again the next morning. Then Your Grace need have no doubt but that in twenty-four hours you will have ridden the whole world about."

"Now by my beard!" cried the king in delight, "I did not think it could be done so soon. Two questions hast thou answered right well and merrily; but now here is the third, from which you shall not shrink. Tell me truly, here and now, what I do think?" And the king chuckled maliciously, for well as his victim had answered hitherto he felt sure that he would fail at this last and most difficult question of all.

But the disguised abbot had his answer ready. Without a moment's hesitation he responded to the third question.

"Yes, that I will do, and make Your Grace merry," he cried quickly. "Your Majesty thinks I am the Abbot of Canterbury. But I am only his poor shepherd, as you may straightly see. And I have come hither to beg pardon for him and for me." And throwing open his gorgeous vestments he displayed his shepherd's smock beneath the abbot's robes.

The king rolled back in his seat, roaring with laughter at the joke. It was long since he had been so taken in. Although the trick had been played against himself, yet he had humour enough to forgive the jester for the sake of the jest.

"Now by the mass!" he cried, so soon as he was able to speak for laughing. "I'll make thee lord abbot this day in his place. Such a jest deserves a rare reward."

"Nay, now, my liege," said the shepherd. "Be not in such a speed. Alack! I can neither read nor write. What should I do dressed up as an abbot? I would far rather tend my sheep as of old under the blue sky of heaven."

"Well, then, I will pay thee four nobles a week so long as thou livest," said the king, "for the sake of this merry jest that thou hast shown me. And when thou goest home thou canst tell the old abbot that thou hast brought him a pardon from good King John."

So the Abbot of Canterbury was saved by the wit of his faithful shepherd; and they both lived happily from that time onward until they died in a good old age.

The Ancient Mariner

HE was an old seafaring man, bronzed and weather-beaten, with bright, glittering eyes that shone strangely in his thin, brown face, and he stood by the side of the road, eagerly scanning the faces of the passers-by, as though he were looking for someone whom he feared to miss. Suddenly the strange eyes were filled with a gleam of satisfaction and relief as they fell upon the face of a man who, in company with two companions, was hurrying along the road towards him.

These three friends were hastening to a wedding-feast to which they had been bidden as guests. They were late already, and when the old seaman with the thin face and bright eyes left his watch by the roadside, and stepping in front of them, caught one of them by the arm, the other two hurried on. Doubtless it was some acquaintance of their friend's, of whom he would soon rid himself. And anyway they had not time to wait. The man who was stopped turned in anger and astonishment to the old man, who was an utter stranger to him.

"By thy long grey beard, now wherefore dost thou stop me?" he cried; then, as the old man did not answer, he added impatiently: "Canst thou not hear the merry din from the bridegroom's house? The wedding-feast to which I am bidden is set, the guests are all met together, and I am next of kin. Whatever it is you have to say to me I cannot stay to listen to you now."

But the ancient mariner seemed to take no notice of the man's impatient words. He fixed his strange eyes upon the face of the wedding guest, and kept a firm hold of his arm with his lean brown hand. The wedding guest jerked his arm in exasperation.

"Unhand me, grey-beard loon!" he cried, and the mariner dropped his hand at the words. But he did not remove his strange gaze, and the wedding guest, though fretting and chafing at the delay, felt that in some unaccountable manner he must stay and listen to the mariner's story, whatever it might be. He was held by some strange spell, and dropping down on a stone by the roadside with a gesture of resignation, he waited for the old man to tell his tale. The mariner had his will, and fixing his eyes impressively upon his unwilling listener, he began to speak.

"The ship was cheered, the harbour cleared,
  Merrily did we drop
Below the kirk, below the hill,
  Below the lighthouse top,"

he said, and then he went on to tell the wedding guest this strange story.

"Day after day, when we had left the harbour, we sailed southward with fair wind and weather. Every morning the sun rose up upon our left, every evening he sank down into the sea upon our right. Good fortune seemed to be befriending us, and in due course we sailed across the line."

A sudden burst of music came from the bridegroom's house. The bride had entered the hall, and the musicians were playing before her as she went to meet the bridegroom. The wedding guest beat his breast in vexation, but still the strange spell was upon him. Much as he wanted to be off, he could not choose but stay where he was till the mariner's tale was told, and fidgeting with growing impatience he listened while the old man went on :

" So far had we sailed in safety, but now a mighty storm arose, so tyrannous and strong that it seemed as though the storm fiend himself was behind that terrible blast. He caught us with his mighty wings and drove us before him southwards. With sloping masts and dipping prow as though fleeing from a foe, the ship swept on before the blast ; and when at last the storm died down we found ourselves far out of our course, in the strange cold seas around the south pole.

" And now we were in the midst of mist and snow. Great mountains of ice floated around us, with snowy cliffs, and caverns that shone in their depths with the green light of emeralds. No shape of man or beast was to be seen. There was nothing but ice and snow as far as the eye could see.

" We were in a woeful state ! Alone in a world of snow and cold, surrounded by fearful sounds, the cause of which we could not discover, hemmed in by fields of ice and the thick impenetrable fog, it seemed as though we must perish of cold and hunger. It appeared impossible that we should find our way out of those unknown seas, and we were despairing of ever seeing our homes again, when one day a great white bird came flying through the mist and snow. It was an albatross, the bird of good omen, and we hailed it joyfully in God's name, as a sign of His love and care for us.

"We gave the bird food to eat, and it circled round and round us, and suddenly the ice which held us fast began to split. With a crack like a roar of thunder it flew apart, a way was cleared for us, and with shouts of gladness we gathered round to watch while the helmsman steered us through the yawning chasm out of the land of ice and desolation.

"And now a good south wind sprang up behind us and bore us northward once again. The fog still hung about us, but every day we were drawing nearer to the seas where we hoped to find sunshine and warmth. And the albatross, which had brought us good fortune, followed us, and every day came when we called it for food or for play.

"In mist or cloud, on mast or shroud,
It perched for vespers nine;
Whiles all the night, through fog-smoke white,
Glimmered the white moon-shine."

The old man paused, and the wedding guest was startled at the look of agony on his face.

"God save thee, ancient mariner!" he exclaimed. "Why look'st thou so?" And the ancient mariner, with a shudder, as though his companion's words had awakened him from some terrible dream, said slowly:

"With my cross-bow I shot the albatross."

He paused again, as though overcome with horror at the recollection of his deed. The wedding guest was growing more and more uneasy. If he could, he would have stolen away while the old man was lost in thought,

" It was an albatross, the bird of good omen, and we hailed it joyfully."

but still he could not move from his place, and presently the mariner resumed his story.

"The sun now rose up upon our right, and went down at evening upon our left into the sea, but it was dim and red, veiled in the mist which hung about us. The south wind still blew us northward, but no beautiful white bird followed us now, nor came any more at our call for food or play. My companions looked at me in horror. They said I had done a dreadful thing to kill the bird which had brought us good luck, and now some terrible misfortune would be sure to overtake us. But as day by day we yet flew onwards before the welcome breeze, the mists gradually cleared until at last we passed out of the fog altogether. And then, when they saw how the sun rose up clear and bright, no longer shrouded in gloom, the seamen changed their minds, and declared that it must have been the albatross which had brought the fog and mist. It was right, they said, to slay the bird that had brought us such ill-luck. And still we sailed on northward until once more we reached the line, and we found ourselves in another unknown sea.

"The fair breeze blew, the white foam flew,
The furrow followed free;
We were the first that ever burst
Into that silent sea.

"But now, alas! the good fortune that had followed us since we left the world of ice, departed. Down dropped the breeze, our sails dropped too, and our ship stood still in the midst of that strange silent sea. The sun was right over our head, set in a blazing copper sky. The heat was terrible; and day after day we lay there becalmed, as idle as a painted ship upon a painted sea. The boards blistered and shrank beneath the fierce sun; the very deep seemed to rot, and horrible slimy creatures with legs crawled upon the surface of the slimy sea. At night the death-fires danced on the ocean, making the water burn green and blue and white, like witch's oils. When we slept we had dreadful dreams of a spirit that had followed us nine fathom deep from the land of mist and snow to wreak vengeance on us for the death of the albatross, the bird that he loved.

"And now a worse trouble than all that had gone before befell us—our water gave out! Day and night we were consumed by a mighty thirst that was wellnigh intolerable in that terrible heat. All around us, as far as the eye could see, was water, yet we were dying of thirst. Water, water everywhere, nor any drop to drink! The death of the albatross was beginning to be avenged.

"And now there passed a weary time. Each throat was parched with thirst, glazed was every eye. And as for me—ah! well a-day! what evil looks had I from young and old! It was I who had killed the albatross—it was through me that this terrible disaster had befallen us—and my companions hung around my neck the dead body of the murdered bird, to be to me a cross and a constant reminder of my crime."

The wedding guest had forgotten now his impatience to be at his kinsman's wedding. He sat listening entranced, held by the mariner's glittering eye, while the old man continued his story. He told how for many days the ship and her crew lay in that pitiful state until at last, far off, they beheld a ship approaching them. There was joy amongst the dying men then, but it was a joy that soon faded away and brought them even nearer to despair. For when the strange craft drew close, it was seen that she was nothing but a phantom ship, whereon they saw a woman play with Death for the souls of the mariners. The old man told how they all shrank away in horror as the spectre ship shot past them; and how as she passed, the sun suddenly dipped below the surface of the sea, and dark night came rushing down upon the doomed men. And after hours of darkness, when at last the horned moon rose up into the sky, one after another his shipmates dropped down dead. Without a sigh or groan they fell beside him, each turning upon him as he fell his sad reproachful eyes, while the mariner heard each soul pass by him like the whizz of his cross-bow.

As he reached this point in his terrible story, the wedding guest, who had been gazing at him in ever-growing horror, shrank away with sudden fear. Surely, he thought to himself, no man could pass through such awful experiences and live? This could be no living man, it must be a spirit! And he tried to rise and escape, crying out:

"I fear thee, ancient mariner! I fear thee and thy glittering eye!" But it seemed as though the mariner read his thoughts, for he spoke to him reassuringly.

"Fear not, fear not, thou wedding guest," he said. "This body dropped not down. My shipmates all lay dead around me, but I—with the slimy creatures of the ocean—I lived on! Alone, alone, all, all alone, alone on a wide, wide sea!

"I looked to heaven then, and tried to pray, but I could not. I had never learned how to pray in my time of prosperity, and now in my hour of need prayer would not come. I closed my eyes and lay there amongst my dead companions, but even through my closed eyelids I could still see the look which they had cast on me in that moment when their spirits fled. Seven days and seven nights I lay there, parched with thirst, consumed with fever, tortured almost beyond endurance, but yet I could not die.

"On the seventh night, as the moon rose up into the sky, shedding her radiance upon the waters, I lay and watched the water-snakes as they moved in tracks of shining white beyond the shadow of the ship. Blue, glossy green and velvet black, they coiled and swam, and from their gleaming bodies flashed forth rays of golden fire. I lay and watched them, and suddenly my eyes seemed opened to their wondrous beauty. Hitherto I had loathed and hated these creatures of the deep, but now it seemed as though scales had fallen from my eyes. I saw their beauty, I realised their loveliness, and a feeling of love towards them sprang up in my aching heart.

"'Oh, happy, living things!' I cried, and as I cried it appeared as though some kind saint took pity on me, for the self-same moment I felt that I could pray. And with my prayer the spell began to break. The dead body of the albatross fell from my neck and slid into the sea, and sleep—blessed sleep—fell upon me.

"Oh, sleep! it is a gentle thing,
   Beloved from pole to pole!
To Mary Queen the praise be given!
She sent the gentle sleep from Heaven,
   That slid into my soul.

"I slept as I had not slept for many days and nights, and when I awoke from my life-giving sleep I found that it was raining. My lips were wet and my body was wet, and I drank in the precious moisture with a joy which I was unable to express, and felt that I could move my limbs again. And then I heard a roaring, as of wind in the distance. It did not come near the ship, but the very sound of it seemed to fill the sails, and suddenly as I lay watching, the dead men all about me rose up and began to work the ropes as they had been used to do. The helmsman steered, the ship moved on although never a breeze blew, and I rose up too, and began to work with the rest. A troop of blessed spirits had entered those dead bodies, and through their help the ship moved on again, away from that terrible sea of death and fear.

"Slowly and smoothly sailed the ship until noon the next day, then once more the sails fell down and the ship stood still. But it was only for a moment. Soon she began to move backwards and forwards with a short uneasy motion, then, like a pawing horse let go, she made a sudden bound which sent the blood into my head all weak and dizzy as I was, and I fell down in a swoon.

"How long I lay in that swoon I do not know, but when I returned to life once more I heard two voices talking in the air above me.

"'This is the man,' said one of the voices, 'who with his cruel bow laid low the harmless albatross. The spirit who liveth by himself in the land of mist and snow loved the bird, and now it hath been slain by this man whom the creature loved and trusted.'

"Then in my trance I heard another voice reply, a voice that was softer and sweeter than the other.

"'This man hath penance done,' it said, 'and penance more will do.' And then they spoke of how the ship drove on so fast without wave or wind, and I heard one of them saying:

"'Fly, brother, fly! more high, more high!
Or we shall be belated:
For slow and slow that ship will go,
When the Mariner's trance is abated.'

And then I awoke, and the ship was sailing on gently and smoothly. It was night, calm night, the moon was high, and the dead men stood together on the deck, still working the ship.

"And now the terrible spell was broken. No longer did the dead men hold me with the terrible stony curse in their eyes which had haunted me all through those long days and nights of agony. Yet still, although now I could turn my eyes from theirs, and could once more look out far across the green ocean, I saw little of the sight before me. My soul was too lately relieved from the horror of that time, and I felt as though even yet the pain and anguish and terror of it might overwhelm me once again. I was

"Like one, that on a lonesome road
Doth walk in fear and dread,
And having once turned round walks on,
And turns no more his head;
Because he knows a frightful fiend
Doth close behind him tread.

"But soon there breathed a wind on me that fanned my cheeks and raised my hair like the wind from the meadows in spring. It mingled strangely with my fears, yet still it felt like a welcoming. Swiftly, swiftly flew the ship, sweetly blew the breeze, and suddenly—oh, dream of joy!—I saw the lighthouse top—I saw the hill—I saw the little church of my own dear country!

" We drifted over the harbour bar, and I prayed aloud with sobs and tears.

" ' Oh, let me be awake, my God! ' I cried in anguish, ' or let me sleep alway! '

" The silent moonlight flooded the little bay, the rocks shone like silver, and even the weathercock on the church spire was steeped in light. I turned my eyes back to the deck, and there—oh, wondrous sight!—I saw those dead men lying once more cold and still in death, but on every dead body stood a radiant seraph-man, each waving his hand in signal to the shore.

" Then soon I heard the splash of oars, and the pilot's boat appeared in sight. On board were the pilot and his boy, and the hermit who lives in the wood beside the town, where the shore slopes down to the sea. And when I saw the good hermit my heart leapt up with hope. Surely, I thought, he will shrive my soul. With holy water he will wash away the blood of the albatross. And joy beat in my breast, joy that even the presence of those dead men could not blast.

" The boat drew nearer, I could hear the men talking now.

" ' This is strange,' they said. ' Where are all those fair lights that made signal to us but now! ' And the pilot paused on his oar.

" ' I am a-feared,' he said, ' it hath a fiendish look.' But the hermit would not let him turn back, as he was half-minded to do.

"'Push on, push on,' he said cheerily. And the boat came close beneath the ship. And at that moment a sound was heard under the water. Louder and louder, and more and more dread it grew, and then with a fearful roar it was upon us. The whole world seemed to split asunder at that sound, and the ship sank down into the water like lead.

"Stunned by that dreadful noise, my body lay afloat amid the swirl of waters. Then, as though in a dream, I found myself lying in the pilot's skiff. The frail craft spun round and round in the whirl of the water; then gradually the waves died down, and all was still again, save for distant echoes of that awful sound from the hill. I moved my lips and sat up, which terrified the occupants of the boat. The pilot fell down with a shriek, his boy seemed utterly crazed with fear, while even the holy hermit was in awe of me, and prayed aloud where he sat.

"I took the oars and pulled the boat to land, and stood once more in my own dear country. Then I turned to the hermit, who had stepped out after me.

"'Shrive me, shrive me, holy man!' I begged, and the hermit made the sign of the cross on his forehead.

"'Say quick,' he cried, 'I bid thee say! What manner of man art thou?' And forthwith this frame of mine was wrenched with a terrible agony which forced me to begin my tale. And then, when I had told it all, at last I felt that I was free—free from the stain of guilt, free from the blood of the albatross, free from the murder of my fellow-men.

"Since then, at different times, that agony returns. My heart burns within me until the ghastly tale is told.

It is the penance I must ever pay for my sin. I pass like night from land to land; the moment that I see his face I know the man that must listen to my tale, and with strange powers of speech I tell him of my sin, and the sorrow that it brought upon me."

As the old man finished these words a loud uproar burst from the bridegroom's door. The wedding feast was over, and the bride and her maidens had passed into the garden-bower. From the little church rang out the vesper bell, and the ancient mariner added a few last words.

"Hark!" he said, "the vesper bell is bidding me to prayer. Sweeter than the marriage feast is it to walk to the holy house of God with a goodly company, old men and maidens, youths and innocent babes, each to bow to his great Father, and lift up holy hands in prayer. I have been alone on a wide, wide sea, so wide and lonely that it seemed as though God Himself was scarcely there, and in my hour of greatest need it seemed to me as though even my Saviour had deserted me. Take warning from me, oh, wedding guest, and learn to love all things well, both man and bird and beast, so best shalt thou learn to pray well."

The mariner, with his bright, glittering eyes and his white beard, turned away, and in a moment he was gone. The wedding guest turned slowly from the bridegroom's door, for it was useless to attend the marriage feast now. He went like one who has been stunned, and on the morrow he rose up a sadder but a wiser man, pondering on the lesson the mariner's story had seemed to him to teach.

It seemed to the wedding guest that it was a warning to respect the life and liberty of every creature, and never to hurt or kill in idle sport any living creature that God has made, for

> "He prayeth best who loveth best
> All things both great and small;
> For the dear God who loveth us,
> He made and loveth all."

Paradise and the Peri

THERE stood one morning at the gates of Paradise a Peri, one of those fallen spirits who had lost their place in Heaven. She might not enter through the glowing gateway; but as she stood gazing at the glorious sights within she wept to think that by her sin she had lost for ever her right to enter there.

"How happy," she cried aloud, "are the holy spirits that wander there, amidst flowers that never fade nor fall. The gardens of earth and sea are mine. I may wander at will amongst the stars and pluck their golden blossoms; but, beautiful though they are, one flower of heaven outblooms them all! The waters of Cashmere are sunny and sweet and cool, the river of Tibet shines clear and golden in the sunlight, and yet the waters of heaven outshine them. All the pleasures of all the years multiplied together cannot be compared with the joy of Paradise—one minute of heaven is worth them all. Oh that I had never fallen from my high estate—oh, that I might win back my right to Paradise!"

The Angel who was keeping the gate of Paradise heard her words, and his heart was filled with pity. Tears of compassion filled his eyes—tears as beautiful and holy as spray from the fountain of Eden lying on the blue flowers which only blossom in Paradise—and drawing near to the Peri, he said gently:

"One hope is thine. In the Book of Heaven it is written:

> The Peri yet may be forgiven
> Who brings to this eternal gate
> The gift that is most dear to Heaven.

Go seek this gift, redeem thy sin, and the gates of Paradise shall be opened, even to you."

Filled with joy and hope, the Peri turned from the golden gates. Swifter than a falling star she winged her way earthward. She would search through the world until she had found that gift. But where should she look for it first, and what could it be?

"I know where unnumbered rubies burn in caverns beneath the earth," she said. "I know of wonderful jewels hidden fathoms deep in the sea. I know where the jewelled cup containing the Water of Life itself lies concealed—but what are these gifts worth to Heaven? There is never a gem that shines like the gems in the steps of God's throne; and what would the drops of Life be worth to Him who holds the deeps of all eternity?" And the Peri wept again to think how little the gifts which she could bring would be worth to God.

As she winged her way across the earth, sorrowful and heavy hearted, she came to a battlefield where a young warrior stood alone beside the river of his native land. All his friends lay dead or dying around him, while with shouts of triumph his enemies closed him in. He alone remained to do battle for his country's honour. His blade was broken in his hand, one arrow only remained in his quiver, but his heart was undaunted still.

The captain of his foes drew near with a proud air.

" Live," said he. " Your life shall be spared, and you shall share my glories with me. A spirit such as yours is too brave to die."

The young warrior made no answer in words. He pointed to the river flowing red with the blood of his countrymen, and then drawing his bow he sent his last arrow towards the invader's heart.

Fast flew the shaft. The tyrant lived, the brave young soldier fell, as he had known he must when he gave his valiant answer. But dear though life was to him, his country's honour was dearer still. When the tide of war had swept past the Peri flew to the spot where his body lay and caught the last drop of blood his brave heart had shed as his spirit left his body. Then upwards to the gate of Heaven she took her flight.

"Surely," she thought, "this must be the most welcome gift to Heaven? "

But the angel shook his head as she laid the precious drop in his hand.

"Sweet indeed, to Heaven," he said, "is the blood poured out by man to save his native land. But, see, the crystal bar of Heaven moves not. Holier far must be the gift that will open the gates of Paradise to you."

Sadly the Peri turned away. What was this wonderful gift that would win her a place in Heaven? Once more she flew down to earth in search of the one thing which would win salvation for her. All day long she wandered about, and when the sun went down she found herself in a country where a dreadful pestilence was raging. People were sickening and dying in the space of a few hours. A man might rise up in the morning strong and full of health, who before night fell would be lying cold in death. All around were sick and dying people, and the Peri's heart ached with pity for them as she passed by, but she was unable to do anything to help them in their terrible need.

Presently she came to a grove of orange trees beside a lake whose still waters lay stretched out pure and shining beneath the silver moon. Under the trees lay a man who had felt that he was stricken with the plague and had stolen out thus to die alone lest he should give the infection to those whom he loved.

As the Peri watched him pityingly a young maiden came into sight. It was the young man's betrothed bride, who had heard that he was dying and had followed him out to the grove of orange trees. It was for her sake that the sick man had wished to die alone; but the maiden's heart was too brave and true to allow her to stand aside for fear of the infection and let her lover die in loneliness and solitude. Heedless of his remonstrance she insisted upon remaining beside the dying man to hold him in her arms and share that last, lonely watch.

Before the night was over the brave maiden sickened, too, of the terrible plague. She lived just long enough to close her lover's eyes. Then she too sank down beside him, and with one last long kiss she died.

The Peri flew softly down beside the lovers, undivided even in their death, and stole the farewell sigh of the brave maiden. Then, as the dawn began to brighten in the sky, she unfurled her wings and soared upwards again, her heart throbbing with the hope that she might win a place in Heaven with that precious sigh of pure, self-sacrificing love. But, alas! her hopes were vain.

"Not yet," said the Angel, barring her way through the gate. "Wonderful and holy and dear to Heaven is this second gift that you have brought; but there is one thing that is holier and dearer even than love so true and pure as this. Until you bring this gift in your hand I cannot open the gates of Heaven to you."

Once more the Peri turned away. Once more she sought the earth; but her wings were heavy and weary, and her heart was aching with longing and hope unfulfilled. Where should she look now for this mysterious gift? What, oh what, could the treasure be that was so dear to Heaven?

All day long she wandered hopelessly, and when the evening came she found herself in a rich and fertile valley. In a field close by a little child was playing amongst the rosy-hued flowers. He was as fresh and sweet as the flowers themselves, and with his little, eager, sunburnt hands he was trying to catch the blue butterflies that fluttered around the meadow blossoms. The Peri paused to watch the boy's play, and while she hovered gazing a man rode by, who stopped to give his horse water from a wayside well. Sitting on the brink of the well to rest, for he had ridden far and was very weary, he too turned to watch the child as he laughed and sang amongst the flowers.

The Peri, with her magic gifts, could see right down into the heart of the man. And as she read the dreadful things that were written there she shuddered. For the man had led a very wicked life. There was scarcely a sin in the world which he had not committed. It seemed as though there could not be one good impulse left in the heart of a sinner such as this.

At this moment the bell for vespers rang through the valley, gold-toned and sweet, calling all mankind to prayer. The boy abandoned his chase of the blue-winged insects, and, falling on his knees amongst the fragrant flowers, he lifted his hands and face to Heaven, and began to say aloud his tender, innocent prayer.

It was a beautiful sight, the fair child kneeling there in his purity and innocence, lifting up his heart to God; and the man sitting beside the well felt a sudden pang dart through his heart. Once he too had been an innocent child; he too had played amongst the flowers and chased the butterflies; once he too had knelt to lift a pure, stainless heart to God at close of day. And as the memory of the pure, happy days of his boyhood flashed across his mind the tears sprang into his eyes—the first tears he had wept since he had left those days behind him—and, falling on his knees beside the child, he, too, hardened sinner though he was, lifted up his heart to Heaven in grief and penitence.

The Peri sprang forward and, unseen, caught one of the precious drops that lay upon the man's cheek. Then, with the sparkling drop close-circled in her hands, she flew once more towards the gates of Heaven. And this time as she drew near the gates were flung wide open to welcome her, and the Angel stood to greet her, smiling, his hands outstretched to draw her in.

"You have won your place in Paradise," he said. "You have learnt the lesson all must learn who enter these gates. Joy is yours for ever now, for your task is done. In your hands you bear the gift that is most dear to Heaven—the tear of a penitent soul.'

Horatius

THERE was grief and dismay and consternation in the great city of Rome, for Lars Porsena, King of Clusium, had summoned his battle array and was marching with enormous forces of armed men to take and sack the city. He was championing the cause of Tarquinius Superbus, who had once been Emperor of Rome, but who had ruled so badly that at last the people had risen in revolt and driven him from the city, declaring that they would rule themselves for the future, and have an emperor no more. And now Tarquinius had asked help of Lars Porsena, and the King of Clusium had sworn by the nine gods whom he worshipped that he would help the house of Tarquin to be revenged upon the Romans.

East and west, and south and north Lars Porsena's messengers had ridden, summoning his people to battle, and well had the summons been answered. Horsemen and footmen had come flocking to his standard from all the villages of the Etruscan plain. There was scarcely an able-bodied man left in all his wide dominions : harvests would have to be reaped that year by old men, the sheep would have to be sheared by boys, the wine pressed out by girls and women, for no Etruscan worthy of the name might linger behind when Lars Porsena, King of Clusium, was on the march to Rome.

Onward through all the villages of the plain swept the great array, drawing daily and hourly nearer to Rome. The country people fled before the approach of the conquering armies. For two whole days and nights the roads that led into Rome were stopped up by the crowds of fugitives fleeing in terror from the enemy. Old men and women came hobbling along on sticks and crutches; delicate women, sick men borne in litters, mothers carrying their babies in their arms with their elder children clinging to their skirts, peasants driving their goats and mules and the wagons of food and corn and household goods which they had rescued from their homes, thronged the roads, so that it seemed that there would scarcely be room for such multitudes, even in the great city. And behind the fugitives, red against the sky, rose the flames from the burning villages, which marked the steady progress of the foes of Rome.

The city fathers were gathered together in the Senate, trying to decide what they should do in the face of this terrible danger. They had determined that they would not yield their city to the invaders without a struggle, and yet report said that the forces coming against them were so numerous that it was almost hopeless to think of repelling them. The only thing that could be done was to gather all their forces within the walls of the town, and trust to the stout defences to withstand the siege of the enemy. They had just come to this decision when news was brought to them that the fort outside the gates had fallen, and that all the guards that kept it were slain.

Up rose the Consul and all the city fathers, and girding their robes about them they hastened to the walls of Rome with all the speed of which they were capable. This was serious news indeed! They had counted on the fort holding out until they had been able to build a mighty barrier at the entrance to the bridge which was the one possible way for an invading army to enter Rome, but now there was no time for this plan to be carried out.

"There is nothing else for it!" cried the Consul. "Since the fort is lost, the bridge must needs go down. Nothing else can save the city!"

But even as he spoke, a scout came flying up, wild with haste and fear.

"To arms! To arms!" he cried. "Lars Porsena is here!" And looking in the direction in which the excited man was pointing the fathers saw a dark cloud of dust raised against the sky. It was Lars Porsena indeed, advancing more rapidly than the Romans had deemed possible.

Nearer and nearer came the cloud of dust, and now from the walls of the city could be heard the rolling of the drums, the trampling of men and horses, the war-like note of the trumpets. And as the people stood staring, paralysed with dismay, the ranks of their foes could be seen through the dust in broken gleams of light.

Nearer and nearer they drew, and plainly and still more plainly might they be seen. Now the Romans could distinguish the banners of the twelve great cities of the plain, high over them all waving the standard of Clusium. And as the vast host drew ever nearer the people on the walls of Rome could see the faces of the leaders of their foes. Lars Porsena sat in his ivory car close beneath his standard. At his right hand rode Mamilius, one of the Latin Princes, who had come with an immense following to join the King of Clusium. And at his left hand rode a man the sight of whose lean, crafty face raised a storm of bitter wrath and hatred in every Roman heart. For this was Sextus, the son of their late Emperor, a man who by his evil deeds and wicked, cruel behaviour had made himself abhorred of the people. Indeed it was largely to rid themselves of the Emperor's son that they had risen in revolt. And when the face of Sextus was seen now amongst their foes, a roar of anger and fury rose up from the whole town. Men and women shook their fists towards him and called out curses upon his head, and even little children cried his name in horror.

But the Consul's face was darkened and his voice was low and grim, as he looked first at the walls and then at the advancing foe.

"They will be upon us before we can bring the bridge down," he said. "And when once they have won the bridge there is little hope that we can ever save the town."

As the Consul spoke these bitter words a man stepped forward. It was Horatius, the Captain of the Gate, a brave, fearless, honourable man, loved and trusted by all the Romans. He came up to the Consul with the direct manly bearing which had won for him the love and respect of all his men.

"Death cometh to every man upon this earth soon or late," he said. "And it seems to me that no man can die better than by giving his life for the ashes of his fathers, the temple of his gods, the gentle mother who bore him, the wife who holds his baby to her breast, and the holy maidens who feed the eternal flame at Vesta's altar. To save them from Sextus and his shameful deeds would be something worth dying for. Hew down the bridge, Sir Consul, with all the speed that ye may. I, with two more to help me, will hold back the foe.

"In yon straight path a thousand
May well be stopped by three.
Now who will stand on either hand,
And keep the bridge with me?"

There was a moment's silence, and then Spurius Lartius, a descendant of one of the oldest and proudest houses of Rome, sprang forward.

"Lo! I will stand at thy right hand," he cried; and he had hardly spoken when another man stepped forward and took his place at Horatius's side. This was Herminius, a sturdy, strong man of fully as brave and proud a family as Spurius Lartius.

"And I will abide at thy left hand and keep the bridge with thee," he said.

The Consul's heart glowed with pride in the three brave men as he looked at them standing so proudly before him.

"It shall be as you have said," he cried, and straightway the dauntless three went forth to stop the approach of the mighty army that was rolling on towards Rome. They knew that they were going out to almost certain death, but in those brave days Romans spared neither life nor limb, nor love nor gold in Rome's quarrel, and so long as they could hold the narrow way until the bridge was hewn down and the city saved, they cared not though the deed should cost them their lives.

So they went out, tightening their armour on their backs, and as they took their places on the farther side of the bridge, the Consul seized an axe. The rest of the city fathers followed his example, and then with hatchets and crowbars and anything else upon which they could lay their hands, the Romans set to work to hew down the bridge. Rich men and poor men, soldiers and civilians, all worked side by side to destroy the way into the city before their foes should be upon them. Like Trojans they worked.

Meanwhile the Tuscan armies came rolling slowly onward towards the bridge-head. Rank behind rank the endless forces lay, their bright armour flashing in the noonday light like the surges of a broad sea of gold. As the great host came before the walls of the city four hundred trumpets sounded, and every man's spear was fixed ready to attack the defenders of the town. Then as the Tuscan ranks caught sight of the three men at the bridge's head, gazing so calmly and silently at their foes, a great shout arose from the advancing army. Three men against all that vast array! Rome had fallen indeed if this was all the defence the city could muster; and three great chiefs came spurring forward from the vanguard of the enemy to make an end of the three solitary defenders and gain honour and glory for themselves. They sprang down from their horses as they reached the head of the bridge, and, drawing their swords and lifting high their shields, they flew to win the narrow way.

But the Romans were not dismayed at the laughter of their foes. They were ready for battle, and as the three warriors sprang at them they raised their shields to ward off their blows and watched for an opportunity of striking home. Lartius, with his first stroke, hurled his opponent into the stream below. Herminius directly afterwards slew the warrior who had engaged him in strife, while with one fierce, fiery thrust brave Horatius brought the third man crashing down dead at his feet.

Then three more warriors, as brave and powerful as the first three, rushed to the attack, but once more the three Romans emerged from the conflict triumphant, while three more dead bodies lay on the ground before the bridge. And now there was no sound of laughter from the Tuscan ranks. Not more than three men abreast could enter that narrow ravine at a time, and brave as the Etruscans might be, none wished to be the next to lay down his life. The Romans held the advantage at present, and six spears' length from the entrance the vanguard halted, while for a space no man came forth to win the narrow way.

But suddenly a cry of " Astur, Astur ! " was heard, and the ranks of the enemy divided to let the great Lord of Luna come striding through. Upon his great shoulders he bore an enormous shield, and in his hand he carried a fearful weapon which none but he could wield. For the Lord of Luna was a giant in strength and stature, and no man had ever yet been able to stand against him in open battle.

He smiled, almost it seemed with approval, at the three brave Romans. Then he turned and eyed the ranks of Tuscany in scorn.

" Will ye dare to follow if Astur clears the way? " he asked contemptuously. And then, whirling his mighty brand in both his hands, he rushed at Horatius and smote with all his strength.

With shield and blade Horatius turned the blow, but yet the sharp steel, though it missed his helm, came too near, for it glanced downwards and gashed his thigh, and as the Tuscans saw the blood gush forth they raised a cry of joy. If Horatius were only out of the way, they thought, they would soon be able to overcome the other two defenders.

But Horatius was not out of the way yet. He reeled indeed from the force of the blow. For one brief moment he leaned against Herminius; then, recovering himself quickly, before the giant could make good his advantage, he sprang, like a wild cat mad with wounds, right at Astur's face. With a mighty thrust Horatius drove his sword home, and the great Lord of Luna fell crashing to the ground—dead!

"See!" cried Horatius in triumph. "See, fair guests, the welcome that awaits you! Which of your noble princes comes the next to taste our Roman cheer?"

At this haughty challenge a sullen murmur ran along the glittering van, a murmur of mingled wrath and shame and dread. There was no lack of noble princes, no lack of men of valour and skill at arms, for all the greatest and noblest men of Etruria were gathered before that fatal place. But all Etruria's noblest felt their hearts sink as they looked at the dead men lying at the feet of the three dauntless defenders of the bridge. And they shrank back, troubled and dismayed, as boys might shrink who, while chasing a hare through the woods, had come suddenly upon a fierce old bear.

There was none who would be foremost to lead the next attack. And for some moments the great host wavered backwards and forwards, as those behind cried, "Forward," and those before cried, "Back." Then at last one man strode out before the confused crowd; and when the three Romans saw him they raised their voices loudly in greeting, for this was someone whom they knew full well.

" Three times he came on in fury—three times he turned back in dread."

"Now welcome, welcome, Sextus!
Now welcome to thy home!
Why dost thou stay and turn away?
Here lies the path to Rome."

Three times Sextus looked at the city, three times he looked at the dead men on the bridge. Three times he came on in fury—three times he turned back in dread. White with fear and hatred, he scowled at the mocking Romans, and as he stood hesitating, torn between his fear and hate, a cry rose up from the walls of Rome. Manfully had the citizens plied lever and axe while their brave defenders had held the foe at bay, and now the bridge hung tottering over the Tiber, the noble river which ran by the walls of Rome.

"Come back, come back, Horatius!" cried the fathers loudly. "Back, Lartius! Back, Herminius! Back ere the ruin fall!"

Back darted Spurius Lartius, back darted Herminius, and as they passed they felt the timbers crack beneath their feet. But when they had reached the walls in safety, and, looking back, saw brave Horatius standing alone on the farther side, they would have crossed once more. But at that moment, with a crash like thunder, the bridge gave way and fell down into the surging waves of the river below.

A shout of triumph rose from the walls of Rome as the yellow foam of the river was splashed high above the houses. For a few moments the river struggled desperately with the mighty wreck, then with a bound the waters conquered, and battlement and plank and pier were whirled down headlong by the tide towards the sea. But the shout of triumph died away as the Romans saw Horatius standing alone on the other shore, faint and weak from loss of blood, with thrice thirty thousand foes before him, and the broad river behind.

"Down with him!" cried Sextus, rejoicing in his foe's discomfiture; but Lars Porsena was of a more generous frame of mind.

"Yield thee, now yield thee to our grace!" he cried, but Horatius took no notice of either of them. He turned round as though not deigning to see the craven ranks who were clamouring for his blood now, but who had not dared to attack him until he was left wounded and alone. He said no word to Sextus, no word to Lars Porsena; but he saw the white porch of his home far away on Mount Palatinus, and he spoke to the noble river that rolls by the towers of Rome.

"O Tiber! Father Tiber!
To whom the Romans pray,
A Roman's life, a Roman's arms
Take thou in charge this day!"

he cried, and then sheathing his sword by his side even as he spoke, he plunged, with all his armour on his back, headlong into the tide.

No sound of joy or sorrow was heard from either bank. Friends and foes alike, dumb with surprise at this daring action, stood gazing with parted lips and straining eyes at the place where he had sunk. And when above the surge of the river his head was seen appearing, all Rome sent forth a cry of rapture, while even the ranks of Tuscany could scarcely forbear to cheer.

But the river was swollen with months of rain, and the current ran fierce and strong. Horatius was weak with pain and loss of blood, and weighed down with his heavy armour, and it seemed to the breathless onlookers as though it was impossible that he could ever gain the shore. Often they thought him sinking, but still again he rose. His brave heart would not allow him to give up the struggle, and it almost seemed as though the good river had heard his prayer and was helping to bear him up above the tide.

"Curse on him!" cried Sextus in fury. "Will not the villain drown! But for this stay we should have sacked the town before night!" But Lars Porsena at his side rebuked him for his unchivalrous conduct towards a gallant foe.

"Heaven help him and bring him safe to shore!" said the King, who was filled with admiration for the brave man. "Surely such a gallant deed of arms was never seen before!"

Still the gallant swimmer struggled on against the tremendous odds that faced him; and suddenly, just as he had grown so exhausted that it seemed impossible to struggle any more, he felt the bottom beneath his feet. And then willing hands were stretched out to help him, and willing arms bore him safe to shore, and amid a scene of wild enthusiasm and excitement the brave soldier was carried shoulder-high through the river-gate, while the people laughed and shouted and clapped their hands and wept for joy around him.

Rome was saved—saved principally by the bravery of Horatius, and the Romans did not soon forget their brave defender. They gave him of the public land as much as two strong oxen could plough from early morning till the light faded at night; and they set up a statue of him in the city where everyone might see it, and underneath in letters of gold was written the story of how he had kept the bridge against the foe.

And though it all happened such a long, long time ago, yet still to the men of Rome the name of Horatius stands for all that is best and bravest in history, and Roman mothers still pray that their boys may grow up with hearts as brave and noble as the heart of the great hero. And in the long winter nights, when the cold north winds blow fiercely out of doors and the peasants gather round their roaring fires within, and while busy over their evening tasks recount the brave deeds that were done in the past, then—

With weeping and with laughter
  Still is the story told,
How well Horatius kept the bridge
  In the brave days of old.

The Courtship of Miles Standish

IN the little town of New Plymouth in the Old Colony days there lived a small band of pilgrims who had crossed the seas in the *Mayflower*. They were Puritans who had left their homes in England and all the comfort of their old life to come to a new country in order that they might worship God in the way that they thought right. For they had suffered great persecutions in England, and if they remained they would be forced to do many things which they considered wrong.

The little band of pilgrims had borne the hardships of the first winter in the strange land bravely, although many of their number had perished from cold and hunger. And now that spring had come, and life and hope had blossomed anew, the little colony took fresh heart and set to work to cultivate the land and improve their primitive dwellings, strengthening them against the attacks of the hostile Indians who inhabited the country, and the cold they would have to endure again next winter.

In the living-room of the house which he shared with a friend Miles Standish, the Captain of the little township, strode backwards and forwards, buried deep in thought. He was a small man, short of stature, but broad of shoulder, with muscles of iron. His face was brown as a berry, although his reddish hair and beard were already showing streaks of grey. He came of an old Lancashire family and had been a soldier from his youth. He had left a beautiful home in England, and had come with his wife and the other sturdy Puritan pilgrims to this new land for the sake of his faith. Although he had only passed one winter there, he had already suffered, for his wife, Rose, whom he loved dearly, had been one of the first to succumb to the cruel cold. She lay buried now under the field of waving green corn which the Captain could see from his window. That was yet another of the trials of these early colonists—they dared not bury their dead and tend their graves with the loving care and tenderness they would have wished. Indian scouts and spies were all about them. Already they had had more than one encounter with the red men, who, until they came, were the undisputed owners of the country, and the pilgrims did not dare reveal to their enemies' eyes how many of their number had succumbed to sickness and privation.

The Captain's thoughts were of his wife as he paced to and fro in the little room, and of one other woman besides, a woman whom he had lately learnt to like and admire and whom he was contemplating putting in his wife's place. He felt that he could not endure much longer the loneliness and solitude he had experienced since his wife's death; and he felt, too, that it would be no disrespect to his dead wife to put another woman in her place. Rose would understand, he thought to himself with a little sigh.

John Alden, the other occupant of the room and of the house, was busily writing letters home to his people in England. He was many years younger than the bluff old Captain, indeed he was the youngest of all the men who had sailed in the *Mayflower*. He was very good to look upon as he sat in the window, fair-haired, blue-eyed, with the open face and fresh complexion of the Saxon. He was a Puritan, too, although it was hardly for the sake of his convictions that he had joined the *Mayflower* pilgrims. It was more because of his love for Priscilla, the beautiful Puritan maiden, that he had left his home in far-away England and come across the seas. He was madly in love with her, though as yet he had been too shy to speak; and now, as he sat writing his letters to go by the *Mayflower*, which was to sail for the old country on the morrow, almost every sentence he wrote contained a reference to her. "Priscilla, Priscilla, Priscilla," wrote his pen, until it almost seemed that it must shout the word aloud.

Presently the Captain ceased his striding of the room. He took a volume from the rough bookshelf on the wall, and, sitting down, he began to turn over the well-thumbed pages. It was a translation of Cæsar's Commentaries, a book beloved by Miles Standish, as its worn pages showed. He turned over the leaves, reading his favourite passages over again; and presently he smote the open page with his hand, exclaiming in admiration:

"A wonderful man was this Cæsar! Here are you and I—one a fighter, and the other a writer. But here was this fellow who could both fight and write, and was equally skilful at both."

"Yes, indeed, as you say, he was as skilful with his pen as with his sword," answered John Alden, looking up from his writing; and he began to recount an anecdote he had once heard of Cæsar's ability to dictate seven letters at once. But the Captain was reading on, and he neither heard nor heeded his young friend's remarks.

"See here," he said. "Do you know what he did once when the rearguard of his army retreated and the front began to give way? Why, he seized a shield from a soldier and put himself at the head of his troops in the most dangerous position of all. Then, calling to his captains to come forward, he himself led the advance against the enemy, thereby winning the day. That's what I always say: If you wish a thing to be well done you must do it yourself. It's no good leaving it to others."

John Alden made no reply to this. He had often heard the maxim before, for it was a favourite one of the old Captain's. He went on with his writing, his pen flying over the paper, until at last his friend shut his book with a bang and turned towards him.

"When you have finished your work I have something to say to you," he said. "Don't hurry, though, for I am not impatient. I can wait."

John Alden pushed his papers aside, saying with deference:

"What is it, sir? I am always ready to hear whatever you wish to tell me."

The Captain fidgeted in his seat, looking red and embarrassed. Then he began to speak in a halting manner choosing his words with care.

"The Scriptures say it is not good for man to be alone, and every hour in the day since Rose died I feel that it is true. In my lonely hours I have often thought of the maiden Priscilla. She too has lost her all since her father, mother and brother died in the winter together. I watched her tending them, ever brave and patient and gentle, and I said to myself that if there are angels in earth as there are angels in Heaven, I have seen and known two of them! And now the angel Priscilla holds in my heart the place the other abandoned. I have thought about it long, but I have not dared to say a word, for somehow, though I am brave enough over other things, I am a coward over this. So I want you to go to the maiden for me, and tell her that the blunt old Captain offers her his hand and heart. Not in those words, you know. I want you to say it for me in the way you think best adapted to win the heart of a maiden. You have been bred as a scholar, and you have read in your books of the wooings of lovers—you will be able to say it in elegant language."

John Alden was aghast at his friend's words. He had never dreamt of such a thing happening, never imagined for one moment, that his old friend would fall in love with Priscilla. For a moment he was too surprised and bewildered and embarrassed to reply. Then, rallying his courage, he tried to hide his dismay by treating the subject lightly. He tried to smile, but he felt his heart grow sick and heavy as he answered, stammering rather than speaking:

" I should be sure to mar or mangle such a message as that. Remember your own favourite adage: if you want a thing well done you must not leave it to others."

But the Captain of Plymouth shook his head gravely, with the air of a man whom nothing can turn from his purpose.

" The maxim is good, I do not gainsay it," he said. " But there are exceptions to every rule. Though I can march up to a fortress and demand its surrender, I dare not march up to a woman with such a proposal. I'm not afraid of a bullet, but I confess I'm afraid of a ' No ' point-blank from the mouth of a woman."

Then he leant across the table and caught his friend's hand, saying persuasively:

"Surely you will not refuse to do what I ask in the name of our friendship?"

John Alden, though torn with longing and misgiving, and still doubtful and reluctant, could not resist that appeal. He returned his friend's handclasp warmly.

"The name of friendship is sacred," he said. "What you demand in that name I have not power to deny you."

So the strong will prevailed. Friendship conquered love; and John Alden left the Captain and went forth on his errand. The birds were building in the trees and bushes, all around him was joy and hope and love and returning life; but within his heart was bitter storm and conflict.

"Must I give up all my hopes?" he cried aloud in anguish. "Was it only for this that I loved and waited and worshipped in silence? Have I followed her over the seas to these desolate shores only to lose her now?"

It was indeed a hard thing the Captain had asked of him; but yet his friendship for Miles Standish was so great he could not refuse to do it, or in any way stand in his light. He must go to Priscilla and give her the message and endeavour to hide from her all his own love and longing. So through the woods he hurried on his mission, anxious only to reach the little wooden dwelling where Priscilla dwelt, and get the ordeal over.

Priscilla was spinning when he reached her home; Alden could see her through the open doorway as he approached. The carded wool was piled to her knee like drifted snow in its purity and whiteness. A big psalm-book lay open on the girl's lap, from which she had been singing some of the old Puritan anthems. It seemed to John Alden that her beauty lighted up the humble room, making the little rude dwelling-place and the modest apparel she wore beautiful through the very loveliness of her face. He stood for a moment gazing at the picture she made as she sat before her wheel, then he stepped forward and entered the house. The hum of the spinning-wheel and Priscilla's singing stopped on the instant. She sprang up with a happy smile as he entered the room and gave him her hand, exclaiming impulsively:

"I knew it was you as soon as I heard your step in the passage. I was thinking of you as I sat spinning."

Alden blushed red with delight at her words. He had plucked a nosegay of the mayflowers that were blossoming in the forest, and he handed them to her now in silence, for he could not trust his voice sufficiently to speak. Oh, if only he were not bound by his promise to Miles Standish? If only he might woo and win this sweet maiden for himself. Once, a few months ago, when he had come to pay her a visit in the midst of a great snow-storm, he had nearly asked her to marry him. If only he had spoken then it might not have been in vain—but now it was too late! The golden moment had vanished; and he stood before her silent and tongue-tied, and gave her the flowers for an answer to her greeting.

The two sat and talked together for a little while, for Alden did not quite know how to open the subject on which he had come. As they talked Priscilla confided to the young man how lonely she was living all alone in the solitude of this strange land. Although he was so shy that he had not seen it, she loved John Alden dearly; and perhaps she was hoping that he might speak now and ask her to be his wife; for she had guessed long ago how much he loved her. So she opened her heart and spoke to him fully and freely of her loneliness; and as he listened it seemed to Alden that the time had come to give her the Captain's message.

"Indeed, I do not blame you for feeling lonely," he said. "Many stout hearts have quailed before this terrible winter; and you are but a woman after all, and need a stronger heart to lean upon. And I have come to you now with an offer of marriage. A good man and a true one wishes to wed you—Miles Standish, the Captain of Plymouth."

Even the bluff old Captain himself could hardly have blurted it out more bluntly than did this clever letter-writer—the man of all others whom Standish had chosen to woo the maiden of his choice because he would know in what beautiful words to clothe the offer to make it acceptable to a girl's imagination. Mute with amazement, Priscilla stared at his face, her eyes wide with sorrow and wonder. She felt almost as though he had stunned her with a blow.

For a few moments there was an ominous silence in the room. Then at last Priscilla spoke in a voice made cold and icy with indignation and hurt pride.

"If the great Captain is so very eager to wed me," she said, "why does he not come himself to woo me? If I am not worth the trouble of wooing, I do not think I am worth the winning."

John Alden began trying to make excuses for his friend. The Captain was busy, and he had no time for such things, he said; but this explanation only made matters worse.

"Such things!" flashed out Priscilla indignantly. "If he has no time for 'such things,' as you call them, before he is wedded, he will hardly be likely to find time for them afterwards. A woman's affection is not a thing to be had only for the asking! When one is truly in love one not only says it—one shows it. If he had shown me he loved me, this Captain of yours, old and rough though he is, he might perhaps have won me. But now it can never happen."

Full of distress at the way he had mismanaged his friend's suit, Alden began to plead earnestly for him. He spoke of his courage and skill, his truth and honesty, and how, although he was sometimes rough in his manner, he was generous and kindly at heart. He was honourable and noble for all his hasty temper. Priscilla herself must remember how gently and tenderly he had helped to nurse the sick during the past winter. He was sometimes headstrong perhaps, and stern as a soldier must be; but he was always to be appeased if he was taken in the right way. He was great of heart, although he was little of stature, and any woman in Plymouth—nay, any woman in England, even—might be proud and happy to be called the wife of Miles Standish.

Alden put aside all thoughts of self as he pleaded his friend's cause so eloquently. And as she listened to him praising his rival in simple, manly words a little smile crept into Priscilla's eyes. A tender look came into her face, and as he paused for a moment she looked up at him archly, her eyes overrunning with laughter, and said in a tremulous voice that yet had a hint of mischief in it:

"Why don't you speak for yourself, John?"

If she had pointed a pistol at him, Alden could not have been more taken aback. For a moment he stared at her in utter amazement, then he turned and rushed out of the house like a man insane. For hours he wandered alone by the seashore, baring his head to the wind to cool the fire and fever of desire that Priscilla's words had awakened within him. Fierce in his soul was the struggle between friendship and love.

"Is it my fault that she has chosen between us?" he cried. "Is it my fault that he has failed and I am left the victor?" But even as he said it he knew in his heart of hearts that though he might fairly be the victor, yet he could never take advantage of his victory while his friend trusted him. Priscilla was as lost to him as though she were indeed the wife of Miles Standish.

As he paced restlessly up and down the sands, facing his future, he saw through the gathering dusk the shadowy form of the *Mayflower*, riding at anchor in the harbour, and suddenly he resolved what to do. On the morrow the *Mayflower* was sailing back to the land from whence she had come. He, John Alden, would sail with her, so cutting himself away from temptation—away from her whom he might no longer love, away from the friend in whose suit he had so grievously failed.

Now that he had come to some determination he felt happier, and he hurried back to the house he shared with Standish to break the bad news. The Captain was sitting alone, absorbed again in the martial pages of Cæsar, but he looked up eagerly as Alden entered the room.

"Well, how have you fared?" he said cheerily. "You have been long enough coming and going. Sit down and tell me all that has happened."

Then John Alden told his friend all that had passed between him and Priscilla, softening down her refusal a little. He made a clean breast of everything; but when he came to the part where Priscilla had spoken the words that were at once so tender and so cruel, "Why don't you speak for yourself, John?" the Captain sprang up and stamped angrily upon the floor until the weapons hanging on the wall clanged with a sinister sound.

"John Alden, you have betrayed me!" he cried passionately. "You have betrayed me—me, Miles Standish, your friend—supplanted me, defrauded me! You who have lived under my roof, fed at my board, drank from my cup, you whom I have cherished and loved as a brother, to whose keeping I have entrusted my honour, my most secret and sacred thoughts—you have played traitor to our friendship! Henceforward there is nothing between us, save implacable hatred!"

He stormed up and down the room, raving in his rage and anger, refusing to listen to anything Alden strove to say in self-defence. But in the midst of his wrath a man appeared at the doorway, begging that he would come at once to a council of war. There were rumours abroad of Indian treachery, and Standish's anger cooled a little as he listened to the man's tale. Then, without a further word to Alden, he buckled his iron scabbard round his waist, and, taking down his sword, he departed, the clank of the weapon growing fainter and fainter in the distance.

Alden was left alone. He rose from his seat and looked out into the darkness, utter desolation in his heart. In one day he had lost the woman he loved and the friend for whose sake he had renounced her, and for a little while his misery was so acute that he felt he could not bear it.

But as the wind from the open window cooled his burning forehead softer thoughts came into his mind. He raised his eyes to Heaven, and folding his arms as in the days of his childhood, he lifted his aching heart and prayed in the silence of the night to the Father who ruleth over all and seeth in secret. Then, somewhat soothed and calmed, he lay down to rest, though not to sleep.

Presently Miles Standish came clanking in. At the council it had been decided that he, with his little band of soldiers, was to depart the next day on an expedition against the hostile Indians. It might mean death, and the heart of the fiery old man softened a little as his eyes fell upon the form of his young friend. He came to the young man's bedside, but after a moment's hesitation he turned away.

"Better not to wake him," he muttered. "Let him sleep on. It is best, what is the use of more talking?" For Alden lay still and feigned sleep, feeling that he could not face the Captain's wrath again just yet. And the Captain did not come near him again. He extinguished the light and flung himself down, just as he was, upon his pallet; and in the pale light of dawn Alden saw him arise, buckle on his armour and take his musket from the corner of the room, and then stride out of the door. The youth yearned to spring up and beg the pardon of the friend he had loved so truly. All the old friendship came back, but pride overmastered his nobler nature.

"He was wrong; he ought to speak first," he said to himself, and he let his friend go away in silence. But when he had left the house Alden arose too and hastened down to the beach and the harbour, where the *Mayflower* was getting ready to depart.

Nearly all the inhabitants of the village were gathered on the shore to watch the departure of the vessel which had brought them to this land. Alden heard all the rumours that were going about—how Miles Standish was to lead the soldiers against the Indians, and how the little community would be left almost unprotected while he was gone. He had not time to ask many questions, for the boat which was to take the passengers out to the *Mayflower* was almost ready to go. The master was waiting with impatience while the people crowded about him, handing him their letters and pouring out messages for him to deliver to their friends across the sea. Alden stood with one foot on the gunwale, ready to spring in as soon as good-byes were all said and the boat pushed off. But as he looked backward to the shore he caught sight of Priscilla. She was standing a little apart from the crowd, and her eyes were fixed on him with a look so sad, so imploring, so reproachful, that with a sudden revulsion of feeling Alden's heart recoiled from his purpose. How could he go away and leave her alone and unprotected in the midst of danger and anxiety? He sprang back to shore, exclaiming to himself:

"Here I remain! As my foot was the first that stepped on this rock at the landing, so shall it be last at leaving, so long as she is here and needs my care." And he breathed a prayer of thankfulness that he had awakened from his madness before it was too late.

He watched while those on board made their last farewells and then pulled off with strong oars to the *Mayflower*, which lay a little way from the shore, and he waited until the *Mayflower* had rounded the point and set her sails for England. When the good ship was out of sight the other villagers went back to their homes, but Alden lingered on the beach, watching the sparkle of the sunshine on the waves, and thinking out a plan of life for the future—the future which would have to be so strong, so brave, so patient and enduring.

Suddenly, as he stood there musing, he heard his name called, and turning round he saw Priscilla standing close beside him.

"Are you so much offended that you will not speak to me?" she said wistfully. "Will you not forgive me for speaking as I did? I know I ought not to have said it, but sometimes when the heart is very full of emotion it does not take so very much to make it overflow. And yesterday, when I heard you praising Miles Standish, transforming his very defects into virtues and quite overlooking yourself in your praise of your hero, my feelings became too strong for me. But you will forgive me, will you not? Surely the friendship between us is too sacred and true to be so easily broken?"

"I was not angry with you," said Alden. "I was angry with myself for having managed so badly the matter entrusted to my keeping."

"No, you were angry with me for speaking so frankly," said Priscilla. "And I was wrong; I freely acknowledge it. It is no secret to tell you that I like you, that I like to be with you and see you and speak with you; and I was hurt and a little affronted when you urged me to marry your friend, even though he were the great Captain, Miles Standish. Your friendship is more to me than all the love he can give, were he twice the hero you think him!"

She held out her hand to Alden with a wistful, pleading air, and Alden grasped it eagerly and said in a voice which he could not keep from trembling a little:

"Yes, we must always be friends. And of all who offer you friendship you must let me be ever the first, the dearest and the nearest."

Then these two, reconciled again, walked homewards together. Priscilla's heart was happy, for she could not help knowing that Alden loved her, even though for some reason he could not ask her to be his wife. And Alden was happier too, for though he was grieved at the loss of the Captain's friendship, yet he, too, knew at last that Priscilla loved him, and would wait until he was free to ask her to marry him.

So the summer passed away. Standish and his soldiers accomplished great deeds amongst the Indians, subduing them wherever he went, and driving them farther and farther from the little colony of Plymouth. News of his brave deeds came through to the village from time to time; and once he sent home a terrible trophy—the head of a conquered Indian chief to be exhibited upon the roof of the fort. Priscilla shuddered when she saw this dreadful evidence of victory; and thanked God that she had not married Miles Standish. She almost hoped that he would stay away, hunting the Indians for ever, for she dreaded lest he should come home from his battles and lay claim to her hand as the prize and reward of his valour.

While Standish was thus winning fame abroad, Alden at home was working busily. He was building himself a new house. He made the walls straight and strong, and fenced it about with an orchard, and all the while he worked Priscilla's image was ever before his eyes. When his day's work was finished he would take the little path through the woods that led to the girl's lonely home, and there he would sit and watch her as she sat spinning, and the friendship between the two grew stronger and deeper with every week that passed.

One afternoon in late autumn Alden sat in Priscilla's little living-room, holding a skein of wool for her on his hands while she wound it into a ball with quick, deft fingers. They were laughing and talking together when suddenly they were interrupted by a messenger who brought them dreadful news. Miles Standish, the valiant Captain, the defender of the little township, was dead, killed by a poisoned arrow in the forefront of the battle.

The man who brought them the news did not wait long. Having delivered his message, he ran on to carry the tidings elsewhere. Priscilla stood silent and still, staring at the place where the messenger had stood, while Alden sprang to his feet. Mingled with the pain and regret and sorrow he felt for the death of his friend was a wild sensation of relief, an awful delight in his freedom. Scarcely conscious of what he was doing, he flung away the skein of wool and clasped Priscilla's motionless form in his arms, pressing her close to his heart as though now she were his for ever, and he would never let her go again. And Priscilla abandoned herself to his embrace, knowing only that her love and constancy were rewarded at last.

So these two lives that had run thus far in separate channels, parted by strong barriers, but ever drawing nearer and nearer, rushed together at last like two mighty rivers, and one was lost in the other.

A few weeks later John Alden and Priscilla stood together in the same little room. It was their wedding morning, and the sun shone brightly, as though blessing them with its presence. The magistrate and the elders of the village were there, and most of the people of the town; and Priscilla and her lover stood up before them and repeated the few simple words which made them man and wife.

The service was ended, the bridegroom turned to his bride with a happy smile, when suddenly a form appeared on the threshold at the sight of which Alden started back, and the bride turned pale and hid her face against her husband's shoulder. And the guests, turning towards the doorway, saw with amazement the form of Miles Standish waiting there.

He was not dead after all—the report that had brought the news was false. But he had been wounded and ill, and was only now recovered enough to return to his home. For a long time he had been standing outside the door, watching the scene within, and as he had watched a soft and tender expression had passed over his clouded eyes. When the simple service was ended he had entered the room. The wedding guests shrank away in fear at first, for they thought it must be his spirit; but the Captain strode across the room to Alden and grasped his hand.

"Forgive me," he said, his voice convulsed with emotion. "I have been hard and cruel, but now, thank God, all that is over. Never so much as now was I the friend of John Alden."

Alden clasped his old friend's hand in both his own.

"All is forgotten between us save the dear old friendship," he cried joyfully, "and that shall ever grow older and dearer." And then the Captain turned to Priscilla with a little smile.

"I should have remembered the old adage," he said.

"'If you would be well served, you must serve yourself!' And there is another, too, I might have remembered with advantage: 'No man can gather cherries in Kent at the season of Christmas.'"

Then the people came crowding around him, greeting him joyfully and asking how it was that he was there alive and well when they had mourned him as dead. They thronged about him, questioning, laughing and interrupting one another, till the good Captain declared that he was quite overpowered and would far sooner break into an Indian encampment than come again to a wedding to which he had not been invited. And when Alden came to the door with a beautiful snow-white bull, which he had brought to carry Priscilla to her new home, he broke away from his friends, glad of the diversion.

Alden lifted his bride on to the back of her beautiful steed, and then, surrounded by her friends, Priscilla set out on her wedding journey to the house her husband had built for her. The sun poured down through the golden autumn leaves, gleaming on the bunches of purple grapes that hung from the vine branches. It was like a picture of the old primitive ages, fresh with the youth of the world: a picture, old and yet ever new, of love, immortal in the endless succession of lovers.

And so the bridal procession passed onward through the Plymouth woods.

Henry the Leper

LONG, long ago, in the little country of Swabia, there lived a rich prince named Henry of Hoheneck. The prince was all that was good and noble. He was handsome and manly in appearance, and he ruled over his wide lands with wisdom and justice, and was dearly loved by all his people. It seemed as though the young man might well look forward to a life of usefulness and happiness, but just as he reached the flower of his manhood he was stricken by a dreadful disease, the terrible plague of leprosy.

Many were the doctors and physicians whom Henry consulted, but none could offer him any hope of recovery. For a few years, they told him, he would linger on in pain and torment; and then, when the disease had swallowed up all his health and strength and beauty, he must surely die.

But one day news was brought to the prince of a wonderful physician who lived in a distant town. This man had made some marvellous cures, people said, and Henry, who would not leave one stone unturned to find a remedy for his loathsome disease, hastened at once to consult him. But the physician shook his head.

"One thing could cure you," he said, "but it is such an impossible remedy that it is hopeless to look for it. You must make up your mind to endure patiently the affliction God's hand has laid upon you."

" Oh, but tell me what the thing is? " cried Henry. " I will give you wealth such as you have never even dreamt of if you will but bring me back my health and strength and cleanse my body of this foul disease."

" All your gold and wealth cannot buy this cure," said the physician, " and all my knowledge is unavailing to procure it for you. The one thing that might save you would be for an innocent virgin, one who is chaste and pure and modest in mind as well as in body, to offer freely her life in place of yours—to give herself up to a horrible and painful death in order that the blood from her young, unsullied heart might cleanse your blood. Nothing else can avail. And even were such a maiden found, who was willing to offer her life freely in your stead, yet are there few possessed of such courage and determination that they would not shrink from the ordeal when the moment came. And unless the sacrifice were made in utter willingness it would be made in vain."

Sadly and sorrowfully Henry turned away. Now he knew, indeed, that there was no hope for him. He could never find a maiden who was capable of such a tremendous act of self-sacrifice, and even if he did he could never ask her to die in his stead. There was nothing for him but to accept God's will and wait patiently for release from his pain.

Upon Prince Henry's wide estate there was a little farm where dwelt a peasant and his wife and children. It was a beautiful, peaceful spot, and when Henry knew that he was doomed to die he came for shelter to the peasant's humble roof. He felt that he could no longer bear the state and ceremony of his great castle. He wanted nothing except to be left in peace in some secluded place, where none might see and pity his affliction. The peasant loved his lord and master dearly, and did all in his power to make him comfortable. He and his good wife felt honoured indeed to think that their lord should come to their house for refuge in his sickness and grief.

The good man and his wife had a little daughter, a child just growing into maidenhood. She was sweet and fair to look upon, and so gentle in all her ways that all who saw her loved her. She waited upon Prince Henry with the utmost care and tenderness. Her brothers and sisters shrank away from the sight of the poor sick man with his disfiguring illness; but the little maid, filled with pity for his suffering, would never shrink from him. She was always at hand to run his errands or to talk to him. Many a weary hour did she help to while away with her gay chatter, and soon Henry grew to love the girl dearly. He showered costly presents upon her, delighting in her wonder and gratitude, and surrounded by her loving care he felt that his pain was a little eased.

It happened one night, as the two peasants sat with their master after the evening meal had been cleared away, that they begged the prince to tell them if he had done all that he could do to cure himself of his disease. And Henry, touched by their sympathy and love for him, opened his heart to them and told them what the physician he had last consulted had said, and how impossible was the cure he had told him of. The peasants listened to his words with great sorrow, and their little daughter, who was sitting quietly at the prince's feet, listened too, with grief and wonder, for she had not before realised how terribly ill her dear master was. Her parents and the prince took little heed of her presence, for they counted her but a child; yet nevertheless the little maid took in every word they said.

That night her father and mother were awakened by the child's sobbing as she lay in her little bed at the foot of their couch.

"What ails thee, daughter?" they asked in alarm; but when they knew the cause of her grief, how the sickness and suffering of her dear lord lay heavily upon her mind, they bade her lie down again and sleep.

"It is God's will," they told her. "It is as great pain to us as it is to thee; but there is nought we can do. We must resign ourselves to the Lord's hand, as our Lord Henry has done."

But though they quieted the little maid's sobs for the time being, they had not quieted the grief of her mind. Day after day, and night after night, her trouble weighed upon her, until at last there was born into her child's heart a great resolve. She was a maiden, young and innocent. She loved her lord with a love so great that she was willing to do anything in the world for his sake. Why should not she offer to give her life for him?

Once this thought came to her, her grief passed away. Her heart was lightened of its heavy load of sorrow, and but one doubt alone troubled her breast. She feared lest her lord would not accept her sacrifice; that her parents might refuse to allow her to make the offer. And, indeed, when she told her father and mother of her resolve they made a loud outcry. At first they utterly refused to allow her to do this thing. But the maiden pleaded so earnestly with them, and used such eloquent words to urge her cause, that they were overcome with astonishment at the things she said, and, being simple, God-fearing folk, ught that she must have been inspired by God's own rit to make this sacrifice.

"We cannot go against God's will," they said nblingly to one another; and at last, with many tears bitter misgivings they gave their little daughter leave offer her young innocent life in exchange for her ster's.

At daybreak the next morning the maiden hastened Henry's bedside.

"Do you sleep, my dear lord?" she asked, stepping tly up to him.

"No, little wife," he said tenderly—for such in play often called her. "But why are you awake so early lay?"

"My grief for you has kept me from sleeping," wered the maiden. "But now, take courage, for I e come to offer my life in exchange for yours. I self heard you say that if a maid could be found who ıld of her own free will offer herself to die for you your lth and strength might yet be restored. And I, my r lord, love you so tenderly that this world holds no piness for me when you are sick and ill. So I have ie, freely and of mine own intent, to give my life for rs."

At first Henry would not hear of such a thing. His ole being revolted at the thought of letting this sweet, ocent child suffer a terrible death for him. He refused erly to listen to her proposal, and though the girl gged and prayed him with tears to let her do this thing, would not hear of it. But gradually, as the maid still tinued praying, and her parents themselves came and gged him to accept her sacrifice, pointing out how much more his life was worth than hers, his determination not to permit the sacrifice weakened. He was sick and ill and tired, and not in a condition to resist their importunities, and though he held out for a long time, yet at the last he was overborne by their entreaties and gave way.

"God knows how unwillingly I do this thing," he said wearily, "but how can I hold out against you all? In truth you must have heard God's word bidding you to do this, and how can I resist God's will?"

When she heard his words the maiden sprang into his arms, clinging to him and sobbing for joy, while her parents went sadly out of the room. They could not bear to think of the death that was coming to their dear child; but yet they thought that it must be God's will, and so strove to resign themselves to all the sorrow that was coming.

Then the maiden was arrayed in fine silken garments and set upon a beautiful horse, and when she had taken a sorrowful farewell of her father and mother she rode forth with Prince Henry to the town where the great physician lived. Prince Henry rode in sorrow and sadness, although he was going to find new life. But the young girl's face was full of a wonderful light, and her heart was filled with happiness to think that she was to be the means of bringing health and strength to her beloved master.

The physician could hardly believe his ears when he heard that a maiden had been found willing to suffer all that he must do. He took the child aside and asked whether it was true that she was doing this thing willingly, and whether she had any idea of the terrible ordeal she must undergo.

"Remember," he said, "all your suffering will do no ood to the Prince if, when the moment comes, you lanch or shrink. Think what it will mean. You must e down before me naked on a table; and then, when I ave bound you hand and foot, I must cut your heart out f your breast. Bitter the pain will be, terrible the trial! Iave you indeed the strength and courage to do this hing? Speak but the word and I will let you go free, ven now."

But the maiden smiled up into his face.

"Indeed, sir, I have the courage," she said simply, ' and I know that I shall not shrink. The love that I ear my dear lord is so great, that however great the sufering may be I will cheerfully endure it, so that he may ve and be healed of his pain. God will give me strength o bear the trial."

Looking into her face the physician saw that what she aid was true, and, marvelling at her courage and evotion, he went into the outer room where Prince Henry vas sitting, his head bowed on his hands in misery and voe.

"Take heart," he said to the Prince. "New life hall be yours. The maiden does indeed love you enough o offer her life freely for you. By her death you shall e made whole."

Prince Henry answered not a word. His heart was oo full of shame and anguish for speech; and while he at struggling to find utterance, the physician turned from im and went into the inner room, locking the door fast ehind him.

Still Henry sat in silence, scarcely realising what was bout to happen; while in the inner room the physician tripped the brave little maid of her clothing, and bound her fast, by hand and foot, to a table. Then he took out a long, cruel-looking knife and began to sharpen it upon a stone before he began the sacrifice.

But when the sound of the knife being sharpened came to his ear Prince Henry awoke from his trance. He realised all at once the awfulness of the deed that was being done for his sake; and he knew that no life would be worth living, however strong and beautiful it might be, if it meant the loss of the child who had grown so dear and sweet to him. He sprang up and flung himself against the locked door.

"Stop, stop!" he cried in anguish. "You shall not do this thing! Open to me at once! Open to me, I say!"

But the physician would not open the door.

"Not so," he answered from within the room, "I have somewhat of weight to do before I open the door."

"Open to me! Open, I say!" cried Henry, beating madly upon the panels. And the outcry he made was so great that at last the physician was compelled to open the door. When Henry saw the girl lying there, bound hand and foot, ready to give up her life for his sake, his feelings grew too strong for him, and he turned his face away, sobbing with emotion.

"It shall not be," he said to the physician. "I will pay you all that you would have charged, all that you may demand; but the brave maiden must not die. Rather will I suffer the pains that God has laid upon me."

Then the physician, with a great gladness in his heart that he need not do this horrible thing, unbound the maiden and lifted her up. The maid was overwhelmed with grief that she might not be allowed to complete her ifice; and she begged Prince Henry with tears and yers to let it take place, but this time Henry was n.

" It shall not be," he said, and with his own hands he hed the maid in her garments again. Then, in spite all that she could say, he set her once more upon her se, and, having given the physician all the money he promised him, he started out to take the child back to home. And this time, although he was going to cer- n death, his heart was at rest within him. He was not led from his bodily sickness, it is true, but he was freed m the terrible grief of heart and mind that had been on the outward journey.

But though her master was happier than she had ever n him, all the rest of the day the brave little maiden pt and mourned that she might not make the sacrifice her lord. And when they came to the little inn where y were to pass the night she went at once to her mber and sank down on her knees beside the bed, sob- g and praying to God to allow her to help the prince om she loved so dearly. All night long she wept and yed, and her prayers were answered in a wonderful nner. For in the night, while he slept, Prince Henry s cured of his sickness; and when he awoke the next rning he found that his body, which only yesterday had n so full of loathsome sores, was as clean and pure and ole as the body of a little child.

Full of joy and wonder, he hastened to the maiden's m to tell her of the good news. And when the child the answer that God had sent to her prayers she fell her knees and poured out her praise and thanks.

" The Lord God hath done this thing," she cried.

"Now let me take with love and gratitude the life which He hath given me back."

That was a happy journey home, back to the little cottage where the maiden's parents dwelt. And who can tell the joy of the father and mother when they received their dear daughter, safe and well, into their arms again, and saw their master, restored to health, standing at her side.

Of course, you can guess the ending of the story—how the prince married the maiden who had dared so much for him, and how the humble little peasant girl became a great lady, the greatest in the land. Many a happy year did these two, who loved one another so dearly, live together, ever doing good and winning the love and reverence of all who were round about them, until at last they went together upon their final, happy journey.

Till, hand in hand, at length they trod
Upward to the Kingdom of God.

The Sensitive Plant

IN a beautiful garden there once grew a sensitive plant, which was fed by the winds with silver dew. Every morning it opened its tender, fan-like leaves to the sun; every evening as the darkness fell it closed them again beneath the kisses of night.

It was springtime in the garden, and everywhere was felt the spirit of love. The flowers awoke from their long winter's sleep, the snowdrop first, then the violets, wet with the warm rain of April, their sweet breath mingled with the fresh, warm odours of the awakening earth. After the violets came the wind-flowers. the tulips and the narcissi—the tall, lovely blossoms that gaze on their own eyes in the mirror of the stream until they die of longing for their own loveliness. Then came the lilies of the valley, their tremulous bells sheathed in pavilions of tender green; the hyacinths, purple and white and blue; roses, unveiling their glowing beauty, petal by petal; pale garden lilies, lifting up their moonlight-coloured cups to the sky; the jessamine with its faint delicate smell, and the tuberose, the sweetest flower of all for scent. Many other lovely flowers from every country and climate grew in this wonderful garden.

A little silver stream ran through the garden, shaded by the sweeping, overhanging boughs of the tall trees that grew upon its banks. Broad white water-lilies lay on the surface of the water, while the sunlight, golden and green, glinted down through the interlaced branches above them. Paths of lawn and moss wound here and there, some open to the sun, others hidden in the cool shade beside the river. They were all paved with daisies and other dainty flowers, while beside them were pavilions of blossoms, shading the glow-worm from the evening dew.

All the flowers in the garden were happy and smiling, lifting up their faces to heaven and sharing one another's joy in the sun's warm rays. Each blossom seemed to breathe out life and love; but of all the beautiful plants there, none seemed to feel the love and joy more than the sensitive plant, which could show so little of the happiness it felt. For the sensitive plant had no blossom of its own. It had no radiance and colour to gladden the eyes, no beautiful scent to shed on the summer air. Yet its deep heart was more full of love than the hearts of any of the other blossoms; more than they could ever do, it longed for the beauty of the world, the beauty which it did not possess. And, although it could only give love and never receive it, there was no plant in all the garden that was happier. The light winds which blew so tenderly amongst its leaves, the beams of light shed by sun and moon and star, the insects, swift and free and beautiful, which passed over the petals of the neighbouring flowers; the hot, quivering vapours of noontide—all were like ministering angels to the sensitive plant, bringing joy almost too great to bear. And when the day was over and evening descended from the sky, when the air was filled with rest and love and deep delight, when the birds and beasts and insects were silent and hushed, save only for the nightingale and the creatures which waken in the darkness, then the sensitive plant was gathered up into the bosom of the twilight, the earliest child of all to be lulled to sleep in the embrace of night.

The garden was tended by a lady whose mind and heart and spirit were as tender and lovely as her face and form were beautiful. From morn till eve she worked amongst her flowers; and it seemed as though they knew and loved her, and responded to her care for them. She had no companion, but yet she was not lonely or sad, for all the living world around was her delight. The flowers rejoiced in the sound of her light feet, and glowed beneath the touch of her gentle fingers. She brought water from the stream for those that drooped and fainted under the sun's hot rays; she emptied the cups of the flowers which were weighted down with thunder-rain, and lifted their heads with tender hands, sustaining the languid ones with rods and osier bands.

The gnawing worms and the insects which did harm and damage to her blossoms she would gather into a basket and bear them far away into the woods, where they could no longer hurt her garden. She carried them gently and tenderly, for she would not cause them any pain that she could help. She knew, poor things, that if they did ill it was of innocent intent. But the bees and the butterflies and the soft moths that kissed the lips of her flowers and wrought only good, she did not touch. And the insects seemed to have no fear of her; but hovered around her like attendant angels as she moved about the garden. All through the spring and summer this gentle lady lived and worked in her garden, tending the flowers as though they had been her own children and she their mother. But ere the first leaf turned brown in the autumn she died.

For three days the flowers in the garden waited for the coming of their lady. Every hour they missed her sweet presence, none more so than the sensitive plant, who had loved her best of all. But on the fourth day they felt the heavy steps of the bearers as they carried the mistress of the garden to her last resting-place; and although they did not understand in so many words what had happened, yet they seemed to know that they would never see their dear lady again.

From that hour all the flowers in the garden slowly drooped and died. The roses shed their gold and crimson petals, the lilies bowed their pale heads to the ground, the leaves, brown and yellow, and grey and white, were borne away on the cold wind as it whistled through the trees. The water-lilies died in the stream. The rain came and beat down all the plants that yet remained, leaving them lying all wet and sodden and rotting upon the cold, dank earth. Loathsome weeds began to grow where no weed had ever been allowed to rear its head before, thistles, henbane, docks, nettles, darnels and rank hemlock. Fungi sprang up from the decaying ground, with agarics and mildew and mould; and in the riveret a great bank of weeds and scum blocked the flow of the water, damming it with roots all knotted and twisted, which looked like great slimy water-snakes below the surface.

The sensitive plant felt the change in the garden more than the other flowers. The other flowers just lay down and gave up their lives. But the sensitive plant shrivelled together, and in its heart it wept great tears of bitter regret. The leaves fell, and the sap shrank down to its roots; and then winter came and laid his cruel, icy fingers upon the poor, bruised, broken plant. All the other flowers were dead by this time; even the weeds had fled beneath the earth. Only the broken-hearted sensitive plant could not die, but lived on through all the bitter torture of frost and snow and icy winds and heavy rains, until at last winter had pity upon it and killed it; and its sad, lonely spirit was at rest with all the lovely things that had once flourished in the beautiful garden.

When winter had gone, spring came back, and the weeds and the toadstools and the docks and the darnels sprang up again, a strong, vigorous growth which overran the once lovely place, choking the life out of the few flowers that tried to come back to life when they felt the sun's warm rays. It seemed as though the lovely garden had vanished for ever.

But it was not so. Men, with their eyes that can see such a very little way, with ears that can hear so little of the real music of the universe, with their minds that can so little understand the great truths that are all around them—*men* may have thought that the garden and the lady who walked there, and the sensitive plant and all the other lovely flowers, were dead. But they were not dead really. Nothing that is lovely and beautiful and sweet and good and true can perish for ever. The garden is there still, although concealed from mortal eyes, and all the fair shapes and the sweet odours and the lady who tended the flowers are in it yet—only a thousand times lovelier, a thousand times fairer, a thousand times happier than before. And there, surely, the sensitive plant, with its great loving heart flourishes still, breathing out its love and joy, and tasting perhaps of a greater happiness than it ever knew on earth.

Alice Fell

IT was a bitterly cold winter's evening, almost too cold and rough for passengers to be abroad. But in spite of the wind and rain a coach was travelling fast along the road to Durham. The post-boy urged his horses forward, for he was anxious to reach the shelter of the inn where they were to stop for the night; and the gentleman who sat within the coach drew his cloak more closely about him and longed for the end of the journey. Suddenly, above the noise of the rain and wind a cry fell on his ear.

He listened intently. It seemed to him that the sound followed with the coach. Again and yet again he heard it, and at last he leant out of the carriage window and shouted to the post-boy to stop.

The post-boy drew up his horses. He and his passenger both listened intently, but the sound had quite ceased, and after a few minutes the gentleman told the boy to drive on. Soon the horses were galloping fast through the wind and rain again. But after a short space the mysterious sound came once more, and once more the gentleman made the driver stop.

" Where can this piteous crying come from? " he said, and this time he alighted from the coach and with the post-boy's assistance began to search for the cause of the noise he had heard. The night was very dark, for the clouds had overshadowed the moon that should have been shining, but with the aid of one of the carriage lanterns the mystery was soon solved. Perched up behind the chaise sat a little ragged girl. She was crying as though her heart would break, although when the coach stopped she tried to stifle her sobs.

The gentleman put his hand on her shoulder kindly and peered into her face.

"What ails you, my child?" he said; but all the child could answer was:

"My cloak, my cloak!"

The gentleman looked round him in a bewildered manner, but presently he discovered the cause of the little one's grief. Entangled in the wheel of the coach was a weather-beaten garment, so old and worn that it was scarcely fit to clothe a human being. Together the post-boy and the gentleman unloosed it from the wheel, though it was with some difficulty that they did so, for it was wound round and round the spokes. When at last they had freed it they found it to be even more ragged and miserable than they had thought—indeed, it was only fit for a scarecrow to wear. Even before its accident it could never have been a very beautiful garment. But its little owner evidently valued it deeply, for she sobbed and sobbed and refused to be comforted, in spite of all the consoling things the gentleman could say.

By questioning the child closely the gentleman discovered that she, like himself, was bound for the town of Durham. She was an orphan, she told him, and her name was Alice Fell. The gentleman lifted her into the coach and seated himself beside her, while once more the post-boy urged the horses on. The gentleman tried his hardest to comfort his fellow-traveller, but the child sobbed on and on. She could hardly have cried more if she had lost her only friend, yet all this grief and distress was but for a miserable, old tattered cloak!

At last the town of Durham was reached, and the chaise drew up at the tavern door. The gentleman carried Alice into the inn and told the landlord of her trouble, then he drew out a handful of money and gave it to the man.

" Buy her a new cloak for the old," he said; " and let it be of duffle grey, as warm and thick and pretty as a man can make or sell."

The next day little Alice Fell was a proud creature indeed. Clad in her new warm cloak she went her way, happier than she had ever been before in her sad, lonely little life. She no longer mourned for the loss of her old ragged garment, for now she had another, finer and warmer than she had ever dreamed or hoped to possess; and, better than all, she had found kind friends who would look after her and see that she never wanted for anything again.

The Pet Lamb

A LITTLE snow-white mountain lamb was wandering disconsolately on the hillside. Many flocks were feeding on the mountains, but this little creature was owned by none. Its mother was dead, and, hungry and lonely and desolate, it wandered to and fro, sending forth its piteous bleating cry, as sad and miserable and deserted as a lamb could be.

None of the other mother sheep would come to its rescue, and the poor little thing was in grave danger of dying from cold and starvation or of falling a prey to the fierce eagles which had their home in the crags of the highest mountains. But, fortunately for the poor little creature, a shepherd came by and found it, and taking it up tenderly in his arms, he carried it home to his little daughter Barbara.

Little Barbara Lewthwaite was a beautiful child, and as sweet and gentle in nature as she was lovely to look upon. She was delighted with her new playmate, and took it to her heart at once. A mother sheep that had lost her own little one was chosen to take care of it until it should grow old enough to care for itself, and Barbara spent nearly all her play hours with her new pet.

Soon the lamb was old enough to be taken from its foster-mother, and during the warm summer weather it was tethered out of doors under a tall beech tree, which gave it shelter from sun and wind and rain, while every morning and evening Barbara herself would bring it draughts of new milk. The grass under the beech tree was green and tender, and the little lamb had a happy life nibbling the fresh young shoots and frisking gaily about as far as his long rope would allow him. But the happiest moments of his day were when his little mistress came to visit him. He would run to meet her whenever she appeared, and when she had to go away he would strain after her, saying as plainly as though he could speak to her in words how dearly he loved her.

One day a poet came by and saw the two together, the snow-white lamb and the little maiden kneeling at his side. The child, all unconscious that she was being observed, was speaking persuasively to her pet, urging him to take the food which she had brought him, and the poet, charmed at her lovely face and pretty voice and manner, weaved a song about her as he stood watching the scene.

"Drink, pretty creature, drink," coaxed Barbara; and the watcher weaved the words into his song and put into his poem all the words that he imagined the child might say to her little pet:

"What ails thee, young one? What? Why pull so at thy
cord?
Is it not well with thee? well both for bed and board?
Thy plot of grass is soft, and green as grass can be;
Rest, little young one, rest; what is't that aileth thee?

"Here thou need'st not dread the raven in the sky;
Night and day thou art safe—our cottage is hard by.
Why bleat so after me? Why pull so at thy chain?
Sleep—and at break of day I will come to thee again."

The poet watched enchanted until the little girl had said good-bye to her playmate and left the spot. Then he too turned homewards, repeating to himself the lines he had made, turning them over and over in his mind, and polishing them here and there. And as he walked along it seemed to him that after all the poem was not his. More than half of it belonged to little Barbara, who by her tender words and gentle movements had suggested it to him.

Again and once again did I repeat the song;
" Nay," said I, " More than half to the damsel must belong,
For she looked with such a look, and she spake with such a tone,
That I almost received her heart into my own."

Count Gismond

A YOUNG girl once lived in an old castle in France. She was the daughter of an ancient and honourable house, but her father and mother were dead, and her only relations were the two girl cousins, both of them older than she, with whom she now dwelt.

The maiden was very beautiful, and because of this her cousins were jealous of her, though they were obliged to try and hide their jealousy, for the girl was so gay and happy and sweet that everybody loved her—at least, nearly everybody. There was one man who hated her, Count Gauthier, a great friend of the two cousins, and he joined with the jealous women in scheming to injure the girl who was such a thorn in the flesh to them.

Count Gauthier had not always hated the maiden. Once he had loved her passionately, but his was no true love, and the girl shrank from him and would have nothing to do with him. And as from an unworthy love springs ever the deepest hatred, so now the man who had once sworn such vows of loyalty and fealty thought only how to work the overthrow and humiliation of the innocent young girl. And with the help of the girl's two cousins he laid a plan which for cruelty and treachery could hardly have been surpassed.

The girl's birthday was not far off, and in her honour her cousins arranged for a great tournament to be held at the castle, at which she, crowned as the Queen of Beauty, was to present the prizes. The morning dawned bright and fair, and the girl, who at heart was scarcely more than a child, stood laughing and talking happily as she was dressed for the great occasion. Her two cousins assisted at her toilette, helping to adjust the roses in her garland, and answering her merry chatter with words as gay and light-hearted as her own. No hint they gave by look or word of the wicked scheme they had planned with Count Gauthier. And when their little cousin was ready they took her arms affectionately and led her downstairs between them.

The birthday queen took her throne in state under the canopy prepared for the queen of the tournament. Her friends and acquaintances gathered round her, talking and laughing and offering their congratulations upon her birthday honours. All around was bright and gay, and everybody seemed in the highest spirits. The gayest of all was the little queen herself, who never dreamt, poor child, of the pain and shame in store for her. Count Gauthier had chosen the place and the time well. Half the countryside would be there to witness the girl's humiliation.

Presently the hour agreed upon by the conspirators came. The tournament was over, and the spectators came crowding round the queen's throne, waiting for her to present the crown of victory to the knight who had overcome. The heralds, indeed, were just bringing the crown to present it to the queen, when suddenly Gauthier stalked forward, holding out his hand with a menacing gesture.

"Stay!" he thundered. "Bring no crowns here! She is not worthy to be Beauty's queen. She is no inno-

"Will you be my wife?" he asked her in words so low and gentle; and the little queen, who had fallen in love with him as soon as ever she set eyes upon his face, could find no voice to answer. She could only hold out her hands to him beseechingly, and Gismond, rising to his feet, took them and caught her to his breast.

And then, amidst the shouts of the people, he led her forth, never to return, for he would not leave his bride any longer in the home where she had been so shamed and insulted.

The two cousins lived on in their castle, untroubled any more by the beauty of the little maid they had envied so. Count Gauthier was dead, as dead as the lie by which he had tried to injure an innocent child. And far away in their beautiful home Count Gismond and his wife lived in almost perfect happiness. Two lovely little boys were born to them.

The mother would often watch her children at their play, loving to trace in their features some resemblance to their father, who to her was the most perfect gentle knight that ever carried sword. And often when she thought of that terrible day when she stood alone and defenceless before the mocking scorn of her enemies she would lift her heart to God with a cry for him who had come to her rescue.

"Christ God, who savest men, save most
Of men Count Gismond, who saved me!"

she would say, and a prayer of thanksgiving would pass her lips for the husband whom she loved so dearly.

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